

SWEET BEAST,  
I HAVE GONE  
PROWLING:

*A  
Novel  
of  
Dallas*

by  
*HERMES NYE*

THE CROSS-TIMBERS PRESS  
Suite 101, Great West Life Building,  
3636 Cedar Springs Road,  
Dallas, Texas. 75219.

Book design and painting  
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ED BEARDEN



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Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following persons or firms to reprint certain material in this book:

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Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following persons for assistance and suggestions in various fields: Frances Bell, Lyle Boyd, Nancy Dozier, Mignon Brice, Nellie Lee, Betty Winn, James M. Lee of North Texas State University, John M. Smith of the University of New Brunswick, Sandy Ives of the University of Maine, Helen Atkinson of the Public Library at Houlton, Maine, Ann D. Stimson of the Turner Memorial Library at Presque Isle, Maine, Christine MacDougall of the L. P. Fisher Library at Woodstock, New Brunswick, and the staff of the public libraries in Topeka, Kansas and in Corpus Christi, Dallas and Amarillo, Texas.

Special thanks are due to Helen Lance of Taylor Publishing Company, and to R. Burke Stanard of The Riverside Press at Dallas, for aid and comfort in various matters concerned with production and make-up.

Printed by Taylor Publishing Company at Dallas, Texas.

Also by HERMES NYE:

*Fortune is a Woman.* Novel, Signet Books. New American Library,  
Inc. New York.

*The Folksinger's Guide: How To Sing and Present Folk Songs.* Oak  
Press, New York.

*TS: A Faith for the Desperate.* Booklet, privately printed.

Folk song records, voice with guitar accompaniment.

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### *Author's Note*

*This is a historical novel of the Twentieth Century. To lend it an air of authenticity I have occasionally used the real names of certain persons, of such folk for example, as lawyers, actresses, politicians and ministers of the gospel, who have voluntarily placed themselves in the public view. All other persons, names and characters in this book are fictitious, and any resemblance between them and actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.*

*For*  
Butt-Girl  
and  
for  
Joe

## SONG

Sweet beast, I have gone prowling,  
a proud rejected man  
who lived along the edges  
catch as catch can;  
in darkness and in hedges  
I sang my sour tone  
and all my love was howling  
conspicuously alone.

I curled and slept all day  
or nursed my bloodless wounds  
until the squares were silent  
where I could make my tunes  
singular and violent.  
Then, sure as hearers came  
I crept and flinched away.  
And, girl, you've done the same.

A stray from my own type,  
led along by blindness,  
my love was near to spoiled  
and curdled all my kindness.  
I find no kin, no child;  
only the weasel's ilk.  
Sweet beast, cat of my own stripe,  
come and take my milk.

— W. D. Snodgrass

*PART ONE*

*NORTHERN LIGHTS: OVERTURE*

1.

Underneath it all lay The Ledge, the Maine granite.

Oh, on the surface everything was fair enough — in early times the caribou and Canada lynx, with the Allagash pines that towered ten stories high in the frosty air, and even nowadays the untroubled forests of spruce, birch and sugar-maples, and the moose and bear still prowling the banks of the icy trout streams.

Yes, all that was very fine indeed, but still underlying it is that imperturbable granite, cold and gray like an overcast sky, the last gasp of the Northern Appalachians before they slope off into the Atlantic; and you would do well not to forget it.



Charles Howard Franey was delivered into this land, across the Line, in the Province, on a home-made feather-bed and by a country mid-wife, not too long before the opening guns of the Civil War, and died in it at the time of the unpleasantness in Korea which followed World War II.

New Brunswick, about the size and shape of Scotland, just as dour and frugal, but colder, is one of Canada's Maritime Provinces.

A decade or so before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, Champlain's frail and ridiculous little craft had come poking up into the mouth of the St. John River, and the next three centuries saw this "land of the sea and woods" swarming with settlers.

They were freeholders, whom one social historian might be tempted to call "sturdy yeoman stock," and another, "peasants"; their homesteads and pretensions alike were modest, and they were, as their saying went, "content to bore with a small auger." They were mostly of Anglo-Saxon blood and calvinistic convictions, Loyalists who had picked the wrong horse in the American Revolution, and later on, fugitives from the European revolts and potato famines of the 1840's.

Charles then, my mother's father, was born in the hamlet of Lindsay, in the beautiful wooded hills of the Upper St. John River Valley, and thereabouts he spent his boyhood, in an atmosphere of hard work, Wesleyan piety, and buckwheat pancakes frying over a wood



stove. His mother found herself a widow before Charles was ten, and he spent some rough and ragged years with a stern step-father.

His mother was the next to go. A newspaper clipping for February 3, 1949 mentions his recent ninetieth birthday and adds, "Left an orphan at 14, he was given a home by a neighbor and allowed to go to school winters." The neighbor was an uncle who taught him the carpenter's trade, and the article goes on to state, "Blessed with remarkable health all his life, he has been a great worker and has built over 40 buildings in Monticello alone, including the Baptist Church in 1884 and the Methodist in 1897."

The family photographs from that era, showing the women in dark long-sleeved dresses and the men in black unpressed garments with a resemblance to crumpled cast-iron, reveal Charles Franey as an unsmiling but not unpleasant man, apparently of good conscience and sound sleep, who for all that, was known in his day as a "staving" man, one who would sell the socks off his feet if he could make a profit by it.

He was a spry, wiry man, short like most of his generation, gray-eyed and silky-haired, clean-shaven except for a wavy mustache in the years when he was a dashing young house-carpenter, going out to his work on Mondays and coming back for the Sabbath, harnessing his big red driving horse to buckboard in the summer and to home-made pung in the winter.

So he went his rounds, with buffalo robe and heated soapstone against the cold, doing both the rough and the finish work, the cabinet-making as well as the painting and plastering, putting up by hand-labor the monuments which stand to this day, the churches and schools, and the white unadorned four-square houses, in those days innocent of such debaucheries as gas lines, bathrooms or electrical wiring.

In his early sixties, coming to our farm in Kansas to bear a hand with some major construction, he would bound off the train after half a week's chair-car journey from Northern Maine, with his dusty satchel in one hand and a five-cent tip for the porter in the other. Not too much later in the day he would mount the scaffold, eager for toil, and, like John Henry, with his hammer in his hand.

"Change of work's as good as a rest, by cracky," he would chirp in what we called his Yankee accent, clipping the ends off his words as though with a chisel, and shanghaiing my brother and me away from our absent-minded, Devil-may-care gardening.

Long prior to this, of course, we would have shoved all the playing cards ("the Devil's pasteboards") behind the bookshelves — our single, scruffy Bicycle deck for pitch, and even the games of Rook, Flinch and Old Maid. There was no tobacco to conceal, and no

alcohol beyond the quart of bourbon which Mother kept in the trunk for her "trouble." and on occasion Jakie Belfry's crock of dandelion wine merrily fermenting in the basement. We generally had no money for circuses, spectacles which Grampie deplored because there one viewed female acrobats (probably Women No Better Than They Should Be) in flesh-colored tights, and our library shelves were untainted by racy books or pictures, beyond Gustave Doré's steel engravings of bare-breasted Old Testament sinners, and the orgy scenes from *The Last Days of Pompeii*.

Everybody, Mark Twain observes, has a dark side like the moon, which nobody sees. Nobody, that is, but the family:

"My father never talked about his father and mother," runs a note in my mother's diaries, "nor seemed to care for any of his folk who lived near him, and never cared for anyone after my mother died. He just lived then for what he could get out of all those he met, his own children included. If we made any noise on the Sabbath we got a sound hand-slap on the side of the head and were pounded down in a chair . . . He would then go out and get a birch switch that cut like a knife and whip us all around the room until he got us all yelling and crying . . . I expect he required excitement," Mother concludes with unconscious irony, "but it upset me so I was always crying. I used to get down on my knees and pray to God to let me die before morning so I could never be whipped or teased again."

Thus my mother, Nora Franey Tay, *circa* 1943, at a time, however, as we shall see, when she was in no position to qualify as an impartial witness.

For all that, the old man, now long since laid to rest in the little verberna-scented cemetery on the banks of the Meduxnekeag, still haunts my bloodstream; I still keep my pocket-knife well honed in his honor, and his Protestant Ethic still roots me out of the sack every day at dawn.

His first wife, Lucy Ann Stekel however, was of "a different breed of cats." She was my mother's mother, and her people were soul-people, Methodist preachers and teachers who had come out from England, from Hexham on the Tyne, in the 1830's to minister to the pioneers and Indians of New Brunswick. First settling at the Provincial capital of Fredericton on the St. John River, Susan Hobson and Harrison B. Stekel in time pushed up-stream to Woodstock and beyond, coming to roost finally in the log-cabin settlement of Bloomfield Corner, ten miles from the river and seven from what is now the Maine border, deep in the Canadian outback.

They had not seen their son George for about two decades; he

had run away to sea at the age of ten or so, "breaking his mother's heart," so my mother claims, chronicling the event more than a century later. At any rate, sailing into Fredericton in April 1839, George Stekel the stalwart young tar, inquires for his family and is directed north-west to Bloomfield. The spring log-drives are on the stream, and after reaching Woodstock he strikes out on foot along the logging roads.

He spends a Cotter's Saturday Night at the homestead of one John Nickelson, and next day all hands pile into the slovenwagon, a high-wheeled, bone-jarring conveyance built for corduroy roads and deep mud, and pulled by oxen, and set out for Bloomfield. Arriving there in the midst of the church service, the family is greeted by Harrison Stekel, and a like welcome is extended to the handsome young stranger, exotic as a macaw in his dress uniform. In a scene straight out of the novels of Mrs. Humphrey Ward, the stranger reveals himself as the long-lost son, and the services proceed to the accompaniment of happy unabashed Mid-Victorian tears.

Now, in the family of John Nickelson was a daughter Mary Jane, and it takes not even the talents of a Mrs. Ward to tell us that soon she drew the lonely young sailor to her like a magnet. She was then about fourteen, Juliet's age, and just as ripe and eager for life. Before long, he was asking her to take a turn in the "sweethearts' swing," after he himself had shown off his sailor's skill by shinning up the tree to fasten the ropes.

The "sweethearts' swing," then, a virtual announcement of intent; about this time a grateful government offered fifty virgin acres of homestead nearby, and the sequel can well be imagined.

"If it hadn't been for your brown eyes, George Robinson Stekel, she laughed in later years, "I'd never have gone pioneering with you." So, in the words of my mother's memoirs,

"They married and had bed in the corner with sweet cedar posts and crossed ropes and a feather bed and straw tick. In the other corner he built her a loom which lasted eighty years. Raspberries red as blood came thick and large on the new soil . . . The maples and birch were cut and burnt and the stumps left standing, also a few balm of Gilead which made sap good for sores and bruises; the wild apple trees were grafted, —" and in due time, she might have added, a daughter, Lucy Ann Stekel, was born, on September 28, 1855.

— — —

"Asleep in Jesus"  
Blessed sleep  
From which none ever  
Wakes to weep."

It is hard, these days, to decipher the old-fashioned script without scraping away the lichen that has gathered on the white five-foot obelisk. A scraggly elm or two stands guard over the grave in the Bloomfield churchyard, and beneath the chiseled quatrain one reads also, "Lucy A. Stekel, wife of Charles H. Franey, died June 28, 1891, aged 35 years 9 mons. Also infant daughter died June 12, 1891."

"My mother was very beautiful, so I am told," writes my own mother many decades later. "As I sat holding her hand and rubbing her head with camphor the evening of June 28th, I thought of the years I had spent wanting a white dress, and also thinking why does she not breathe easier so she will soon be able to walk in the orchard among the blossoms."

Lucy was not to walk in the orchard, blossoms or no blossoms; she died that day, and her mother, Mary Jane Stekel (she of the sweethearts' swing) came to lay her daughter out on the cooling board.

"Shall I ever forget," continues the narrative, "when I would steal in and pat her head and call her to come back. From then on I began to talk to God about these things, and I was grown up."

— — —

Beyond all this, we know little of Lucy Stekel Franey. A studio portrait of her with her man shows us a small woman with a pointed, determined chin and a patient mouth. The large ears and dark, deep-set eyes give the impression of some furred, nocturnal creature, beautiful and shy, who was much beloved by her husband, as well as by her daughter Nora who never forgot (nor forgave?) her mother's death. (And did Nora, one wonders, ever get the white dress?)

We know little then, except that she bore Charles Franey three children who lived to make old bones: Nora Atwood, who became my mother, born July 31, 1880; Dee St. Clair, born November 6, 1884; and Hill Harrison (one recalls Harrison Stokoe of Hexham), born October 16, 1886.

One scrapes away the lichen on another side of the stone to read, "Lizzie, wife of Charles Franey, died May 19, 1899"; and nearby, a

modern, more stylish stone of gray granite set tastefully level with the sod, arranged and paid for by my mother — “Dr. Hill H. Franey. 1886-1949.”

Lizzie was Wife Number Two, and Hill — but of both of them, and especially of Nora’s brother Hill (My Brother, the Doctor), more — much more — later.

# # #

2.

"This morning when I got up and got my breakfast and chores done up I went to work in the factory, greased the cheese and was washing the dishes and laid the dipper across the hot water barrel and it fell in when I was going to catch it and my hand slipped and went in so I scald my hands then everything went on smooth til we were stirring the curd I cut a piece out of my finger. About two o'clock we went berring in our woods but the raspberries weren't very thick; when I was coming up from the factory a bee stung me."

All in all, it couldn't have been much of a thirteenth birthday. Nora Franey's spelling, but not her sense of doom, was to improve over the years. We note here also the frenzied industry in the very teeth of disaster, and perhaps some Freudian accident-proneness on a birthday so brutally lacking in either party, cake or candles.

At any rate, all this occurred on July 31st, 1893, in Bloomfield Corner, Carleton County, New Brunswick, a place which hasn't seen much change in the past century or so. True, TV antennas now sprout from the roofs of cottages which have taken the place of the old log cabins, and there is some black-topping on the two-lane road to Woodstock. The country store, the blacksmith shop and the rum shanty are long gone; but the little white church is still there, and the little white schoolhouse stands just down the road from it, with a privy and the ruins of a rail fence at the rear. Even now you can pick high-bush cranberries and trap beaver in the swamps; potatoes are still the money crop, although sugar beets are coming in, and the golden fields of oats and barley still ripple in the autumn sun.

Here Nora Franey spent eighteen years, from the time she was three until the family moved to the States in 1901. Charles and Lucy Franey married in 1879, had moved here from Weston, not too many miles away so that Lucy could be near to her own kin, and from a three-room place into one of six rooms. Charles Franey, now age twenty-four, the staving man, the thruster as the fox-hunters say, was plainly coming up in the world.

The household was a snug little busy-bee operation, financed by house-building and maintained by domestic labor; the orchard, the

small cheese factory and the chicken-house, the cow for milk and the pigs for bacon; the kitchen cozy and warm and clean, with yellow painted floor and turkey-red tablecloth, and the Rebecca-at-the-Well teapot on the back of the stove. Looking back at it now, we can call to mind the pioneer maxim, "You can always tell when you've got a good wife — when there's biscuit dough on the ax-handle."

It was a hard, narrow life, although many of those who lived it did not think so, but also a well-fed and satisfying one, with the warmth that you get from having a number of people together in a small, set-off place. For all that, it was a land where in winter they blew out the lamps around eight in the morning and lit them again around four; when zero was a warm day, and where you broke the ice in the pitcher so as to wash your face in the morning. Here, nobody much took a vacation, and nobody much left, beyond the men who went to the woods in the winter or who worked in the zinc mines so as to come back and buy a farm near The Old Home Place later on.

Night is the winter of the tropics, just as Sunday is the vacation of the pious. On that day, Nora Franey's "Blessed Sabbath," no work was done, and she would be free to attend Sunday school in the morning, temperance meeting in the afternoon and church in the evening. "Your mother," said my Aunt Nell, still jolly-eyed and writing a beautiful hand at eighty-two, "was very strict-living."

The inevitable day before Sunday, Nora's "Black Saturday," would find her father home late in the evening for the week-end and the hours long with dread and toil. Then the fire in the kitchen stove would roar all day up the chimney and the air be heavy with the aroma of cooking — Boston baked beans and brown bread, mince and apple pies, oatmeal cookies and gingersnaps.

With all this, there were the picnics and blackberrying in the summer, and the skating and sliding in the winter, hitching a ride on the double-sled to The Corner for a five-cent treat of peanuts and candy, and once, even going across the Line and up to Presque Isle to see the fireworks and electric lights and to view a man going up in a balloon. Then once, for all his strictness, Charles Franey bought a new Thomas organ from a Toronto catalogue, and on this Nora learned to fumble through the sentimental ditties of the day as well as "Jesus Lover of My Soul" and "Wonderful Story of Love."

Nora's hours were packed with activity from the time she was five or six — sweeping and dusting her room and emptying the slop jars (her diaries refer to this as "doing up my chamber work"), bringing in wood, churning, putting out onion sets, and pressing clothes with a sad-iron heated on the top of the stove.

The house and those in it attracted swarms of callers, who just sat and visited or perhaps bore a hand with the quilting, who came to tea and who often stayed the night. The old Stekel charisma was at work, and this quality and its effect continued through the years when Nora's own family was growing up.

Along with these visitors, Nora's principal reference groups were at the church and at the school. At the church, where she was converted to Methodism at twelve and which she joined at fourteen, she was an ardent worker. We can see the earnest little soul with the prim mouth and appealing brown eyes, bustling up and down the dusty road, collecting ten cents here and fifteen there for the Mission Band. At the school, where all the pupils sat at double-desks, the girls on one side, the boys on the other, and where the teacher if certified had been through at least three months at the Normal School, Nora learned to figure and to write a fair hand, and of course studied the *Royal Readers*.

Within these duodecimo volumes of red buckram with the maple-leaf seal of Canada on the cover, the student was confronted with rhymed maxims urging duty, piety and hard work, stories of shipwreck and peril, of orphans and the poor, and with what might have amounted, in the United States of a later day, to an unconstitutional reference to the Deity:

"Get up; for when all things are merry and glad,  
Good children should never be lazy or sad:  
For God gives us daylight, dear sister, that we  
May rejoice like the lark, and may work like the bee."

Here also is "The Wreck of the Hesperus" and "The Burial of Sir John Moore," along with "The Blind Boy" by Cibber and "The Dog at His Master's Grave" by Mrs. Sigourney. Other poets abound, worthy, hirsute "standards" — Southey, Scott, Wordsworth, Cowper, Campbell and even some of the more chaste works of Byron.

Nora's school then, together with her church and her family, took up most of her time until she was twenty-two. Charles Franey married again, in 1892, a decent year after the death of Lucy, this time also to a woman older than himself. Lizzie Mearney brought to the marriage, like a Breton country girl trudging to her wedding with her feather-mattress dowry on her back, two big black milk cows and, from all accounts, a bundle of loving care for her new step-children.

The new Mrs. Franey however, was not long in becoming afflicted with fainting spells and fits, of which Nora has left a meticulous and clinical account, and was dead of them by 1899, as we have seen from her tombstone at Bloomfield. During these times Nora not only cared for her patient but slept with her, waiting trem-



bling in the night for the next fit to strike; it is during this time also that the entries began to crop up in the diary, which were not to be absent from it until her death. "Gloomy to the tips of my toes . . . Wasn't I lonesome, though . . . Read some, cried some, played some . . . Oh dearie me, what shall I do?"

About two years after Lizzie's death, Charles Franey sold out forever in Canada and moved seven miles west, across the Line and into the States. Monticello, Maine had been founded about eighty years before by a Col. Joel Wellington of Albion who had come through the woods by a "spotted line" from Houlton, to erect a saw-mill on the banks of the Upper Meduxnekeag.

Aroostook County, at the northern tip of Maine, is as big as Massachusetts but still a lot wilder and more heavily timbered. Its clearings show the beautiful tan Caribou loam which raises the famous Aroostook potatoes.

Here in Monticello, Charles carried on his building trade, but soon gave it up for a spell, to try his hand at grocery-store keeping. To his home here, he brought his third wife, May Witchel. The couple had been married the day before, February 12, 1902, at Mars Hill some twenty miles to the North, and Nora came down to breakfast the next morning to find the forty-three year old bride-room, not a man to waste time on trifles, already up and bustling, with the fire going and the porridge almost ready.

Just a few months after that, in September 1902, comes The Departure, the inevitable scene in every domestic melodrama of the period. Charles Franey takes his daughter to the station of "the Potato Road," the Bangor and Aroostook, which has completed its line north from Houlton only ten years or so before, and after a dry, mustachio-ed kiss, puts her on the cars for Bangor. There, she will board an over-night steamer, The City of Rockland, for Boston, to enroll in the New England Bible Training School, and there we will leave her for a spell, while we turn our gaze upon my father.

# # #

"January 2, 1869. George Tay of the Parish of Simonds and Harriet Wohlhauptman of the same place, were married, Lic. No. 709, according to the form of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, by me, John Cassidy, Wesleyan Minister."

George by all accounts was The Quiet Man, and Harriet the peruser of Shakespeare and the Bible. Like my mother Nora, my grandmother Harriet was a five-footer, but with a broad, handsome masculine face which boasted a long straight nose, well-spaced hazel eyes and a wide full-lipped mouth. Most if not all of those features, along with a dreamer's brow, black hair, and a searching if friendly gaze, were inherited by my father, he who in later years came so much to resemble President Dwight Eisenhower. In her prime, Harriet's clear soprano set the tunes in church, and I have to this day her Methodist hymnal with its lonely Shakespearean quote in the frontispiece;

"These high wild hills and rough uneven ways  
Draw out our miles and make them wearisome."

The Tay cottage has long since disappeared, but its successor, stylishly decked out in asbestos siding, still sits by the side of the Monticello-Bloomfield road near the banks of the Dead Stream, with the handsome birch and maple trees in the yard, and its surrounding hundred-odd acres long since passed into other hands.

Thither George Wilmot Tay and his wife Harriet Sophia moved sometime in the 1870's, and there they reared their brood; Wilmot, Carl, Norman, Warren and Nell; and there my father Howard Hermann was born on July 28, 1878.

Like its owners, the house was a quiet one; no musical instruments, beyond perhaps an occasional mouth-organ or jewsharp, made the air lively, and the magazines were such tangy fare as *The New England Homestead* and *The Ladies Home Journal*. The library shelf was a short one, containing mostly schoolbooks and standard English authors, with a heavy emphasis on the Victorian poets. With the latter my father was to carry on a lifelong love affair, not untainted on occasion with a revolting self-righteousness:

Unable to locate her copy of *East Lynne*, Nell had occasion to ask her brother Howard if he had seen it.

"Yes," came the reply, probably in the same tones with which he later was to reproach me for reading *Hopalong Cassidy*, "I saw you reading it, and threw it away. You've got no business with trash like that."

Somewhat the same starchiness prevailed in the family's social life. Unlike the Franey home, which with its bustle and visitors must have sometimes taken on the aspect of a bus station at Christmas Eve, that of the Tays saw few visitors and still fewer parties.

"I never had a birthday party until I was forty years old," Nell recalled in old age, "and then, thinking back over the years, I just had to break down and cry."

For amusement, Nell and her brothers made maple candy on the snow, roasted apples, popped corn and cooked molasses candy on the old Franklin stove. The children grew up to attend picnics and kitchen dances, but these were at the homes of others and never at their own.

So they got on then, wrenching a livelihood from the stubborn soil and living simple lives, probably a cut or two in the social scale below the Franeys but with neither side particularly aware of it. And then,

"Papa and George went to Presque Isle," runs the entry in my mother's diary for Tuesday, January 15, 1895, and continues, "and I went to school and on down to Uncle Allen Stekel's. Two more new scholars, Howard and Nellie Tay." The rambling school-girl pencil is still clear on the ruled yellowing journal-page, and just as clear to us now is the chuckle that Fate must have had, peering over the scribe's left shoulder.

Yes, Fate — for the love of Nora Franey and Howard Tay was to be a redwood growth, slow and steady, with some sort of built-in preservative against dry-rot and termites. It was to be another year or so before certain coy, girlish references to Someone, meaning Howard, begin to crop up in Nora's diaries, and after that, another eight years or so before the wedding in Cincinnati, but the distance runner is a slow starter, and this marriage was destined to go the distance.

For Howard had his way to make, he whose father had died when Howard was eighteen, with most of his brothers Gone Out West and a fourteen year old brother and an eleven year old sister, not to mention a dreamy, poetic mother, to support.

So Howard and Nellie Tay were the new scholars — not pupils, mind you — and my sister Manon recalls,

"I can remember my father saying how he used to look at Nora across the school room, admiring her brown eyes and feeling sorry for her because her mother was dead — and

Mother told me once she felt sorry for Howard because his clothes were so rumpled."

Well, pity is the kid sister of love, and so their love grew. There was plenty of chance for meeting, both during the short winter school-year and at church, and soon we come upon Howard standing up for the Lord, acting as sexton, and opening prayer meeting with "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name," and closing it with "Yield Not to Temptation." They read Tennyson together, both in and out of school, and of course *Evangeline*, little suspecting that soon enough they would be living it.

And so, as the sub-title might have put it on the old silent screen, "Six Years Pass." At the end of this, in 1901 as we have noted, the Franeys moved to Monticello, and Howard began four years of wandering and indecision with a three months' course at the Ontario Business College in Belleville.

Nora's diaries end about here, not to be resumed on a serious scale until the early 1920's, but in their place, she kept the letters which Howard wrote to her. The hand was sure and deliberate, and one can see the lonesome homesick young man, out in the world for the first time, taking all Sunday afternoon for the effort, making, after the leisurely habit of the times first a rough, and then a fair, copy.

"I am writing at one end of a table," runs a pious billet-doux from Crystal City, Manitoba, circa 1901, "and a crew of men are playing cards at the other. What do you think of that? Shocked, no doubt and no wonder. They have coaxed me to play but it was no go, excuse the slang."

Touches of tenderness abound, along with a few pressed flowers, spilling out of the heavy graying note-paper after sixty-odd years:

"Good night, dearest, may angels guard your footsteps always. Yours lovingly, Howard . . . When I went out to milk next morning, thinking of you, dear, I broke down completely and cried like a school-girl, and again last night watching the silvery moon and thinking of you on the steamer . . . Yes, dear, I believe there will be kisses in Heaven."

Touches of tenderness then, and one touch, finally, heart-warming in itself and also for reasons which we shall discuss later: From Hicksville, Ohio, April 8, 1903:

"I am strong now. There is a big fellow named Sharp from York State. He weighs 180 pounds and could handle all the boys 'till I came. He tried it on me one day, good naturedly of course, but someway it did not come out as he expected, which pleased the other boys greatly. They seem to regard

me as a Hercules for my apparent size."

At the end, telegraphy proved to have the key, so to speak, and after less than six months' instruction, Howard found himself a job as railroad telegrapher, first in Rockford, Ohio and then in Van Wert: Van Wert, where a certain Olive Hammer fell in love with him, but, as he confided to me years later, he tendered his regrets (did he venture to tell her, one wonders, that it was "no go?"); and then finally the Big Four beckoned from Cincinnati. He had found his life's work, railroading, but always in a position where, as he put it in his letters, he "could wear good clothes all the time — and do something and be somebody."

It is about time, now, to return to Nora, she whom we left on board the steamer *City of Rockland*, bound for Boston. Sometime in September 1902, she began her courses in the New England Bible Training School. At this devout academy, which demanded of its applicants a letter from the pastor, a health certificate, a grammar school education or its equivalent, and three dollars a week "for board, fuel and lights," Nora set out to become a missionary-nurse.

Her course included such subjects as the lives of the saints, the Bible as the Word of God, world history, hygiene, vocal music and nursing. In an age which believed, perhaps not without reason, that one learned chiefly by doing, and that a few months' formal study of anything was about all that anybody ever needed, the course ran from September through May. Nora set about her studies with good Methodist zip and zingo, and by the end of March 1903, she had got through her book learning and was taken into the hospital as a student nurse.

During that time, the New England Deaconess, which has since grown into a great metropolitan hospital, was located at 175 Bellevue Street in the Longwood District, where it occupied a three-story red-brick row-house with eight beds. It possessed but one fever thermometer, which was passed up and down the stair-well on a cord, as first this and then the other patient required a gauging of his temperature. The work quickly separated the girls from the women; twelve hours a day, some of it spent scrubbing floors on hands and knees, for six and oftentimes seven days a week, with an occasional Sunday afternoon off to stroll in the Fenway or through Mrs. Jack Gardner's recently opened museum.

There was however, one slight hitch. Nora Franey proved to be a loner. Within a year after being admitted to nurses' training she began to find that within the organization "there was no system of management" (which being translated, must mean that nobody wanted to do things her way), and that "the head nurse was very unsatisfactory" (to whom, pray?). And then, on a fateful April 18,

1904, "Miss Betts without a moment's notice, gave me my discharge."

Samuel Butler says in effect that nobody has really lived who has not at some time been thoroughly snubbed, and it could be said with equal truth that nobody has really lived who has not at least once been booted off a job. In any event, it must have been a cruel blow, a hit between wind and water, to the dedicated, bustling twenty-three year old soul-saver, she who had Gone to the Big City to Make Good.

She found herself quickly enough, however, in private-duty nursing, including a hitch or two with the family of a Dr. George A. Niles whom she had met at the hospital. Then, during the summer of 1904, she was nurse for a Miss Warren, a "beautiful Unitarian lady" who lay dying at the Hotel Bellevue of dropsy. Nora has left us a memorable vignette of the nursing profession around the turn of the century, when, for terminal cases, it was *nurse*, rather than *nurses*, 'round the clock:

"Who can write a nurse's life. The long morning hours of toil, the afternoon hours of reading or entertainment, the evening hours of quiet and dozing and languor and impatience, the long long hours of slow pulse, thunderstorms and sleepiness. Imagine just getting nicely tucked in bed and the call comes, too cold, too hot, too wakeful or something equally as interesting."

During these times she too, like Howard, went back intermittently to home-base, to renew herself Antaeus-like by touching the earth once again; and then, after voluminous correspondence and much soul-searching (and being out of a job at the time), she set out late in June 1905, for Cincinnati. She traveled with her father, who bore an angel-food wedding cake baked by the faithful Nellie, and on the 29th day of the month, was married, at the Second Presbyterian Church, to Howard Hermann Tay.

# # #

4.

It is a difficult, not to say thankless, task to attempt a mock-up of the wedding night of one's parents; perhaps the Victorian novelist had the best idea after all, with his, "And now let us draw a curtain and leave the young lovers to themselves" — a device which spared not only the reader's blushes (in a day when readers had them), but also the writer a great deal of work.

Certainly we may imagine a deal of fuss and fumbling, some embarrassed panting and a mutual ignoring of the matter of blood. It was an age, after all, when married women called this sort of activity "family duty" — and on this particular night, of course, there was always Charles Franey, the father of the bride, in the adjoining room.

Be all that as it may, Howard had already located an apartment for his family at 317 Russell Court in Covington, across the Ohio River, in Kentucky and here the young marrieds settled down. Their activities consisted mostly of clerical work on Howard's part and of housekeeping on Nora's, of reading aloud in the evenings, and of occasional excursions to Eden Park. And of course there was church.

The transition from the hardline Methodism of Bloomfield Corner to the urbane Calvinism of Dr. Watson's big-city Presbyterian church in Cincinnati came about when the Tays found the hard edges of their fundamentalism being buffed away by a church whose worldly creed was neatly tailored to the needs of big city sinners in general, and to the "upwardly mobile" in particular.

It was an idyllic life, for the young bridegroom especially, with a beautiful albeit determined young wife, good clothes, and a steady job that was bringing in eighty dollars a month (with, in those times, no irritating deductions).

I have mentioned reading aloud ("Listen to this, dear —"); there was also, for a tragically brief period, the matter of creative writing:

"Howard Hermann Tay. Cincinnati, Ohio, May 12, 1906," runs the inscription in the book, *The Preparation of Manuscripts for the Printer*, Containing Directions to Authors as to the Manner of Preparing Copy and Correcting Proofs, with Suggestions on the Submitting of Manuscripts for Publication. The author was Frank H. Viz-

etelly, "Member of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce."

How and when Howard came to aspire as a writer, and how and when he came to lose his aspiration we shall never know. I can only hazard a dark guess: Nora may well have resented *The Other Woman*, even in the disguise of a gray-eyed Muse, but this is airy speculation at best.

Anyway, the purchase of the book was a prelude to his only publication, a feature story in the old *Westminster Magazine*, an article on John Eliot. Eliot was a Seventeenth Century divine who preached to the Indians, and Howard's article was illustrated by a steel engraving of the missionary himself in knee breeches and conical hat, bringing the Word to a stolid dark-skinned audience gaudy with feathers and blankets. In later years, I asked Dad why he had never gone on with his writing: "Oh, nothing much ever came of it," was his reply, and that was that.

As proof that there was more afoot however, than Wednesday night prayer meetings, oyster suppers in the church basement, trolley rides to Eden Park and doubtless visits to the public library, their first daughter, Manon Lucy Tay, was born September 16, 1906. Not too long after that, Howard got the offer of a job with the Illinois Central in Chicago, and thither the young couple, with their baby daughter, went some time in 1907. There, in the family flat, on Forty-Seventh Street somewhere between Grand and Drexel, I was born on February 11, 1908.

# # #



It was an exciting age to be born into, especially if you were being born white, male, middle-class and American.

The Spanish-American War was ten years over, and T. R. was flexing his imperialistic biceps by sending the Great White Fleet around the world; true, Nicholas II of Russia was having some trifling difference with the Douma, but surely it was nothing which could not be resolved by a show of good will on both sides; cartoonists were having fun with the British-German naval race; in London, the bobbies had arrested forty suffragettes who had tried to storm the House of Commons; Andrew Carnegie was endowing libraries, but not his steel workers who were making about six hundred dollars a year; New York's Sullivan Ordinance forbade women to smoke in public: and one Emmett Densmore was publishing his *Sex Equality; a Solution to the Woman Problem*.

Rudyard Kipling had just won the Nobel Prize for literature, and Albert A. Michelson had just won the Nobel Prize for science, being the first American to do so; Mayor Markbreit of Cincinnati was intoning "No woman is physically fit to drive an automobile," and as though to prove it, men were still outliving women, although the national life expectancy still hovered somewhere between forty-five and fifty.

The Arts were, as usual, in a ferment: The Young Insurgents — Henri, Luks, Davies and Prendergast — were exhibiting at the National Arts Club, and poetry lovers were thrilling to James Whitcomb Riley's "The Boys of the Old Glee Club," as well as to the stately strophes of Joaquin Miller's "Resurgo San Francisco," ("Behold her Seven Hills loom white/ Once more as marble-gilded Rome") and to Robert W. Service's "This is The Law of the Yukon / That only the Strong shall thrive." Current trade — book-lists offered such items as *Little Journeys to the Homes of Eminent Orators* by Elbert Hubbard, and *At the Foot of the Rainbow* by Gene Stratton Porter, not to mention E. Phillips Oppenheim's *The Great Secret* as well as new books or annotated editions by Selma Lagerlof and Henry James. Marie Corelli, Arthur Wing-Pinero and Theodore Watts-Dunton were raising their cultured voices against The Fleshly School of Fiction, and Richard Strauss against the critics of his *Salomé*.

The N.A.A.C.P. was being founded, and articles, doubtless written by Socialists and other trouble-makers, were beginning to hint that "there was a Negro problem in the North as well as in the South." In addition to his sabre, or rather, Big Stick-rattling, T. R. had sent a message to Congress demanding the "moral regeneration of the business world," and saying things that were less than polite about "the possessors of predatory wealth."

Ballroom floors were beginning to quake under the impact of the new "immoral animal dances," the Bunny Hug, the Turkey Trot and the Grizzly Bear. The year 1908 saw the birth of the Model T, but for all that, the Cadillac coupé was selling for around \$1350 F.O.B. Detroit ("The run-about body may be substituted for summer use if desired").

The national debt was less than one billion dollars, and there was a conviction, as Walter Lord has pointed out in his book *The Good Years*, "that the British and American people were bolder, braver, truer, nobler, brighter and certainly better than anyone else in the world."

All or most of this was doubtless lost on the earnest, hard-working Illinois Central clerk, nearing his thirtieth birthday and probably already graying at the temples, as he heard the first squalls of his newly-born son around noon on February 11, 1908.

My birth certificate names me after my father, Howard Herman, but all my life I have been known as Loki. I know not how this came about, only that my father was the one responsible for it. Knowing what I do about the family's M. O., I suspect that Mother wanted me to be a Junior, and that Dad opted for the more distinctive name of the Norse god of mischief; and so each got his way, and I was left with the fate of being designated one thing and called another.

In later years, the city of my birth would become for me a place of infinite glamor and excitement. When I was a boy, our family used to stop off there for a day changing trains, on our way to or from Maine in the summertime, pulling into the cavernous train—shed early in the morning, and then stepping across the street for a breakfast of oatmeal and toast. The clang and bustle of The Big City, the smell of cooking and coal smoke, the rattle of horse-drawn delivery wagons and the Parmalee buses over the cobblestones, the exotic Yellow cabs, built like a brick Rolls Royce, with motometers on the radiator, the whistles of the traffic cops and the yells of the newsboys, all stirred my pulse, seeming to bear me into a magic realm of danger and mystery.

Some of this excitement I may have inherited from Dad, who during his short stay there, must have gulped down the heady draught

of life in the metropolis. We can see him rhapsodizing over the Turners and Rembrandts at the Art Institute, or perched alone in the peanut gallery at the opera on Saturday night and afterwards whistling "La Donna E Mobile" as he strolled home from the trolley. On Sundays he and Nora oftentimes walked around in Jackson Park to hear Creatore and his brass band, she pushing a baby carriage, and he toting a picnic basket in one hand and Swinburne's *Poetical Works* in the other. At noontime in the Loop he used to duck into Henrici's for a snack, spurning the knackwurst on rye which could be had free with the purchase of a nickel beer at any saloon. In spite of all this, his days in Chicago were numbered. He had been with The Big Four in Cincinnati for over three years, from June 1904 through October 1907 and had reported for work in Chicago on the first of November, 1907.

However it proved to be a bad time for a new employee with little or no seniority. Business depressions seem to love October; by the 16th of that month, the Money Panic of 1907 had got under way. By the middle of 1908, in spite of the titanic efforts of J. P. Morgan and his cronies to stop it, it was really roaring down the track, and by the first of June, the Illinois Central in Chicago began dropping its new men from the payroll: Howard Tay was among them.

The father of two babies, one of whom was still in diapers and the other just barely out of them, began walking the streets for a job and filling out application forms. But he could find nothing in Chicago; true, the Santa Fe had a vacancy at eighty-five dollars a month in Topeka, Kansas — but Topeka! — and Kansas! What a come-down after the prestige of Chicago, Boston, and even Cincinnati! Mother's notation in one of her reminiscing letters, "We had an offer from Topeka, but we did not want to go there," probably sums up the situation well enough, although one is tempted to substitute an "I" for the "we" in that sentence. So then, finding nothing suitable, they did the sensible if lordly thing and merely moved the family back to Monticello. In those days, when, if your father-in-law didn't already have a spare room, you could always help him build one, you *Could Go Home Again*.

Probably Charles Franey and his third wife May were glad to see the new family, and doubtless Howard bore a hand in the store, with the milking and other chores. At the end of the summer though, along in September, when like as not the step-mother's nerves were beginning to rip, ravel and give at the seams, the Tays packed up and left Monticello. The job, or one similar to it, still beckoned from Topeka, and after all, Nora had always wanted to minister to the heathen in foreign lands, and here was her chance.

# # #

*PART TWO*

*A GOOD PLACE TO DIG POTATOES:  
STATEMENT OF THEME*

In the Kaw dialect, the area was To-Pye-Ka, a Good-Place-To-Dig-Potatoes; the county took its name from the Shawnees, and the state from the Kansas, People of the South Wind. Long before the Indians though, all this had been the bed of a vast inland sea, where even today you can still find sharks' teeth, the ruins of ancient oyster beds and the fossils of giant crabs. The Mississippi Ice Cap and various glaciers have been there too, leaving behind them mines of sand and gravel and a rich alluvial topsoil like that of Maine and New Brunswick.

Around Topeka, in the north-east corner of the state, the terrain is rolling uplands and open prairie, broken by limestone cliffs, a land "fat and black," as Coronado wrote of it some twenty-odd years before the birth of Shakespeare, and populated in his day by "crooked-necked oxen" or buffalo. The fearless explorer with the restless, greedy eyes never found his fabled treasure-land of Quivera, and never dreamed that it was beneath his boot-soles all the time, deposits of lead, zinc, oil and coal, and, in the area of Salina and Hutchinson, an entire buried mountain-range of salt.

Kansas, set down dead-center in the very belly-button of the United States, is four hundred miles long by two hundred wide, and is tilted like a cellar door, going from an elevation of 4,000 feet in the West, to a mere 700 in the East.

When the Tay menage, iron-bound steamer trunks, straw suitcases and all, dis-embarked at the red-brick Santa Fe station in September 1908, the town was already prim and staid enough, but like an aging call-girl who has given away her trick-suits to the Salvation Army and joined the church, it still had its memories.

Before 1861, Kansas had been in the very eye of the storm that finally broke in the Civil War. After the Douglas Bill of 1854, the Territory of Kansas had become a battleground. Free-Soilers, pushed along by such groups as the New England Emigrant Aid Society and inspired by such poets as Whittier and Lowell, poured into the area by steamer, wagon-train, ox-cart or on shanks' mare. The proslavery groups fought back, but they never had a chance against the small farmers and shop-keepers of New England, who were led on, like the ancient Israelites, by Divine Providence by day

and the prospect of free land by night. Their strife with the pro-slavery night-riders and bushwhackers gave the state its name of Bleeding Kansas, and no political speech of the period was complete without a stand, one way or the other, on the subject. Reputations, like old soldiers, never die, and some of the old taint probably lingered, even after 1900, and had much to do with the Tays' first decision that "we did not want to go there."

The Free-Soilers had won, then, and the territory had become a state in the same year that Ft. Sumter was fired upon, and Topeka, established a short seven years before, had been, along with Lawrence twenty-five miles to the East, a red-hot Free-Soil Town. One senses the masked ironic smile of History a century later, when it is the case of Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka that shows that someone has been unhappy about the plight of the Negro in the old Free-Soil stronghold, itself, and has brought the case that finally broke the back of public—school segregation in America.

By 1908, in fifty-four years of life, Topeka had grown from a cluster of log huts on the treeless prairie to a place of elm-shaded, paved streets, a college town which boasted the state capitol building and the general offices and shops of the Santa Fe Railway. The publishing business flourished here, sparked by the anti-slavery papers of an earlier day, when both the editor and his presses stood in imminent danger of being thrown into the Kaw River, and a mercantile and agricultural supply trade boosted along by the Pikes Peak Gold Rush of 1859 and the buffalo-hide-and-bone trade of the Seventies. One would pay handsomely for an original sound movie in Technicolor of the feast of 1872 which the Kansas Legislature laid on for some visiting buffalo-hunters, Grand Duke Alexis of Russia and his party of officers from the Imperial Navy, which saw among the attending guests, Civil War Generals Custer and Sheridan of the United States Army.

Such pomp-and-glitter was a far cry from Dorson's boarding house at Eighth and Monroe, where Howard and Nora, with their brood and baggage, settled down the second week in September, 1908. Here, they were not too far from the Santa Fe Offices at Tenth and Jackson, nor from the First Presbyterian Church of Dr. Stephen Sewall Estey at Eighth and Harrison. Grammie and Grampie Dorson, as we called them, were colorful folk, old country people from Oklahoma where they had been in one of the land rushes and about which they could talk for hours.

Early in 1909 Howard found a house for rent at 1607 Fillmore Street, and a lot for sale at 1629 to the south of it. To this lot, that very summer, came Charles Franey from Maine, doubtless glad of the chance to see his daughter again, and bringing with him his son

Hill, now twenty-two and a very proper young med. student at McGill in Montreal.

By the summer's end they had put up a two story frame house with a deep wide front porch and a Queen Anne green-shingled upper story. It boasted seven rooms, with a basement and a floored attic, and a back yard suitable for a vegetable garden underneath the big cottonwood tree.

Here they settled down on the nest, and here was born, on February 3, 1910, just two years, after me, Rick Lafcadio Tay. He came into the world early on a star-filled chilly morning, with young Dr. Sloo in attendance, and Dad scurrying downtown through the snow for Grammie Dorson, and the both of them arriving back home too late, to find the baby already born and squalling. Rick he was named, after his thatch of red hair, and Lafcadio after the gentle enigmatic Lafcadio Hearn, the novelist who had wandered from New Orleans to Japan to find his Toulouse-Lautrec soul amongst people who were no taller than he.

Here also, three years later, on March 23, 1913, the fourth child was born; and once more we find some vast, half-sinister shape, some Loch Ness Monster of the psyche, stirring beneath the surface. Jane Carabelle Tay we knew her, after Jane Spencer and Carrie Belle Bilbrey, both beloved Deaconess friends of Mother. Jane Carabelle, then; but it would be more than half a century later that Jane, examining for some inexplicable reason her birth certificate for the first time, saw herself as Jane Allegra, and not Jane Carabelle, Tay.

"Grave Alice and laughing Allegra,  
And Edith with golden hair."

Do we see a glimpse here of the old mole, old Truepenny, at his work again, or instead merely a harmless prank played upon the wife lying helpless in child-bed while her husband sees to the making out of the birth certificate? In any event, for the first year of my sister Jane's life she had the equivalent of an English nanny. This was the same "Aunt Carrie" Bilbrey for whom she was supposedly named, who came up from Fairhope in Alabama on Mobile Bay, a place which we were to visit many times thereafter, where for the first but not the last time The Terror was to visit me, where I saw the ghost and learned to swim — but we run ahead of our story. An English nanny then, for the first year of her life, and it must have been during this period when, with a salary of ninety-five dollars a month, (a ten-dollar raise had come roaring in during May 1910), with a wife, nurse, three stair-step children and a babe in arms, Howard must have felt the crunch, and decided to alter his way of life.

# # #

The view was magnificent and the price was right. It is now 2725 College Avenue, near Sieben Street, but then it was that old gray house on top of the hill, in Berlin Heights. The sub-division was probably named by old Sieben himself, in the pro-German days before World War I, when he baked his own bread and made his own beer and wine in the basement.

It was a two-story frame with a broad veranda across the front, and a tiny porch set in up above it like a shingled howdah on the back of an elephant.

Across the little valley to the East lay the manicured greens and fairways of the Topeka Country Club, the best club in town, and for us a place of unspeakable remoteness and elegance. By it was the settlement of Quinton Heights, through which the stubby little street cars swayed and bounced, on their way to a turn-around near the Country Club gates. From there it was about three blocks westward on the Burlingame Road, surfaced then with crushed rock, but now neatly paved and more fashionably entitled Washburn Avenue, to our mailbox, and from there a long block on up the hill, a long block of rutted yellow dusty clay in dry weather and of rutted yellow muddy clay in wet.

Here, with cozy monthly installments on the original \$4,000 principal, we settled down for thirteen years. From here Dad could commute downtown to work for John Santa Fe, and in his off-hours, be the gentlemen farmer, with thirteen acres of pasture and woodland behind him, with livestock and a vegetable garden, and in those days all of Topeka spread out at our feet. The Capitol dome was visible to us then, as we lolled on the front porch with our bare feet propped up on the railing and a glass of warm lemonade in our fists, and half a mile to the North, and across the Shunganunga, the green tile roofs of Washburn College. When we went to the back stoop to get water from the old cast-iron pump we could view Burnett's Mound, a souvenir left behind by the last glacier and containing, according to Indian legend, a charm which would ward off tornados.

View or no view, however, the brunt of the work fell on Mother. Here was a family of six to be cared for, a family which included in



its ranks a one-year old baby; here was a house that knew neither gas, water, nor electric, utilities and that was set off on muddy roads nearly half a mile from the car-line. And here, to run the whole shebang, was practically no money.

Not that the lack of it bothered us especially, but still I remember Manon's plaint from those days, "Oh Mother, I'm so durned tired of *making do*," and of myself, greedy-gut that I have always been for sweets, catching hell for having blown ten cents for candy and then eating it all — the entire pound — on the way home. The sweets would have been from H. A. Moege's Grocery down in the Heights: Here, when Dad paid his monthly bill, in cash of course, we would always go with him so as to get, as lagniappe, a few sticks of black twisted licorice or a big red jawbreaker.

Transportation was soon arranged, and we had, beside a black Shetland pony, a succession of sorrel mares to pull the old family surrey with its black leather top or the topless two—passenger buggy. Stodgy Old Flo was a cast-off from one of Baughman's ice-cream wagons, and Babe, later on, was the spooky but spirited stepper. Behold Howard Tay, *circa* 1922, in brown herringbone and homburg, whip in hand, with Nora in a long-skirted suit-dress which she has run up herself on the old foot-powered Singer, bowling along Topeka Avenue in the red-wheeled buggy, past the mansions of the Cappers and the Mulvanes, on his way to work, with Rick or me, along for the ride, curled up in the little box-like compartment at the rear.

The streets of Topeka in those days were redolent more of horse manure than of gasoline; the few cars that one saw were majestic, lumbering ships of state, with here and there an electric, in particular one very chi-chi affair of black enamel and plate glass which tooled around town at ten miles an hour under the hand of Mrs. Stephen Sewall Estey.

All told, then, we got around pretty well, what with horse and pony, and later on, bicycles, and always nickel fares on the street car. Clothes were no problem, either. Mother, like a queen gathering her tirewomen about her, would get Mrs. Ben Naylor or some other neighbor to come sit, sew and gossip. Between them, they would whip up dresses for themselves and their girls, usually garments of indifferent cut and of heavy, dark, Christian material which wouldn't show the dirt. The male contingent fared better. Dad always well-tailored, and Rick and I in suits, sweaters and mackinaws from Fred Voiland or Pelletiers. Our high-topped shoes and later on, our lumberjack boots usually came from David J. August, a Jewish merchant of enormous élan, a regular bleedin' toff in shepherd's-check suit and patent leather pumps, and an employer of salesmen

whom we in our bucolic innocence thought we could “Jew-down” below cost, going away giggling with a couple of dollars knocked off the price, hugging our illusion that we had made Old Dave lose money on us but that he would doubtless make it up on the next wide-eyed unsuspecting Gentile.

Food, too, was about us in great plenty. Old Nig, the black Jersey with an udder as large as a bag of oats, gave down gallons of milk every day, milk which Dad extracted at dawn and dusk into a heavy white enameled bucket and then strained through a cloth which hung for the rest of the time above the sink as a roosting place for flies. There was no vaccination, no pasteurization, and for that matter, no refrigeration, beyond that furnished by two giant up-ended sewer pipes let down into the ground just outside the kitchen door. After the milk had “set,” the cream was skimmed off and eaten with oatmeal or whipped up into butter in an old crockery churn.

Vegetables, cherries, apples and grapes sprouted under Dad’s green thumb, and our chickens gave us fryers and eggs by the score. Beautiful black-walnut trees grew along the Shunganunga, and in the Fall we gathered the fragrant green-shelled nuts and trampled the hulls off like peasants treading out grapes, staining our hands a caramel-brown as we shucked them and then, when the fruit inside was cured, cracking the nuts on a piece of ninety-pound rail salvaged from some right-of-way.

A gloomy cellar, musty with coal smoke and stored Irish potatoes was also the place for racks of preserves (“What do you want for dessert, strawberries or pears?”) and for crocks of “water-glassed” eggs. As a chef, Mother was what you might call cordon blanc rather than cordon bleu, being of the bland, scalloped, Boston-Cook-Book, marshmallows-in-the-fruit-salad school; we had mashed potatoes, sweet pickles, scalloped corn, fruit pies in season and jelly glasses brimming with tepid and potentially lethal milk. On occasion we would get a dime’s worth of ice from Baughman’s ice cream factory, ice which had been cut up on the “crick” in winter with big iron saws and stored in sawdust against the summer, and with it make lemon or black-walnut ice cream, turning the big freezer on the front porch until our arms grew weary, and then eating it with slathers of crushed and sugared strawberries.

Our food then was simple, resembling in this respect our pharmacopoeia, the general idea there being that nobody would dare have anything wrong with him that couldn’t be cured by salt, soda, Mentholatum, aspirin, or tincture of iodine. True, at Christmastime in 1918, five of us came down with the Spanish influenza and were heroically nursed back to health by Mother, who was in her element, in complete charge of five helpless people who looked to her

for salvation, rinsing her mouth with alcohol against the germs and bullying Mickey Holmes into delivering our groceries. We all pulled through; however, William Tay, born a few weeks earlier, on November 1st and nicknamed Billy Boy, was not so lucky.

He was a small, weak thing, brown and wrinkled like a walnut, and after two days, was gone from our midst. The next morning Dad came up to our rooms and his voice breaking, told us, "The little baby is dead," and we followed him downstairs, where Mother told us she had waked up in the night to see a soft glow in the room, and in it an angel bending over baby's crib. None of us saw anything especially astounding about this, and only an utter cad would note its resemblance to a stanza in Eugene Field's "Little Boy Blue," then at the peak of its popularity.

This was late in the Fall of course, and as Dad went downtown for the burial permit, one of us gathered some oak leaves stained ochre, scarlet and brown by the frost and put them in a cut-glass vase above the corpse. "Under the autumn leaves," sighed Mother from the bed; both that, and the remark about the angel sounding as though they had come from the mouth of the other spouse.

There were always plenty of apple crates, conned from Moege's Grocery, lying around, and into one of these Dad placed the body, in a blanket padded with cotton batting, and putting a spade and a mattock beside the coffin on the floor of the surrey and Old Flo between the shafts, drove out to Foster's Cemetery south of town. After digging the grave and lowering the coffin into it, he read a chapter from the Bible, said a prayer and then drove us all home to Mother. She had stayed in bed, those being the days when confinement meant just what it said.

Some aspects of the story point up one of Mother's strongest traits, one which I was to inherit from her in great plenty. This was a tendency towards self-pity, and she had it in turn from her own father. On our frequent trips to Monticello in the Summer, Grampie would take me aside at the Bangor and Aroostook station for a leave-taking.

"Be good to your mother, boy," he would say, still in his fifties and agile as a polo pony; "you know, I'm not long for this old world — just living on borrowed time — yes, my boy, on borrowed time."

I probably stammered out something like, "Gosh, Grampie — gee, I don't know what to say," and walked away, but the memory was not lost to me, nor the example either.

Self-pity, then not being forbidden by the Ten Commandments, washed over us like a surf, and especially over Mother. "You'll be sorry when you see me dead and lying in my coffin!" she would

shout at the very crest of some family-wide Walpurgisnacht of the emotions, and Rick would mimic her, dancing out of switching range on nimble bare feet.

While all this was going on, I was in school, starting out at the three-story red-brick building in Quinton Heights, and a year or two later, through some quirk in the zoning, being transferred to the rural Avondale school half mile or so to the south.

Of the school in Quinton Heights I remember little, beyond the nostril-twitching odor of floor sweep and the myopic magisterial overall-clad figure of Mr. McAllister, a man in those days still called a janitor and not yet known as a custodian or maintenance engineer. I remember little then, except for three incidents that put scars on my puny psyche which are visible to this day.

In the play-yard there at Lincoln and Twenty-Sixth Street I soon enough began to throw girls down on the cinder-strewn ground, for which I earned the derisive nick-name of Jack the Hugger, doubtless in honor of the better-known but no less disturbed Jack the Ripper; but my school-mates were better at invective than they were at observation. I was not hugging anyone: I was being hostile as hell, throwing to the ground in effigy who — and for what reason — we may discover later on. Upon another occasion, Margaret Hill McCarter, famous to Kansans of the day as the author of *The Price of the Prairie* and *The Wall of Men*, a lesser-known, poor-man's Eugene Manlove Rhodes or Conrad Richter, came to the school. Singling me out for attention, she commented to Miss Shankles, "Some day that boy will amount to something." What prompted this remark we shall never know, perhaps my soulful brown eyes and unruly, home-cut hair, perhaps my observed activities in the play-yard, — from this she might have concluded that some day I might excel variously as lover, poet, sex fiend, or karate expert specializing in women.

The third incident happened on my first day of school. I was passing the little Mom-and—Pop store near Twenty-Seventh Street, when the proprietor, standing on his porch invited me inside for some candy. I followed him into the store and was given as an introductory offer, a present of a small striped sack of goodies. The following day found me back at the old stand, with the general air of the Scotchman who came home a winner from his first day at the races, wondering how long all this had been going on. I ordered up a goodly store of the mouth-watering treasure with a princely air, only to be told in effect that the times they were a-changin' — "This time you have to pay." I heard him right enough and walked out, stricken, little knowing that I had just been handed a lesson which would take me decades to take to heart.

From Quinton Heights then, both Manon and I transferred to

Avondale, and thence were duly followed, over the years, by Rick and then Jane. When it came Rick's time to go to school, Mother who doubtless wished him out of the house before his time, blandly gave him Uncle Hill's birthdate, October 20th, and his birth year as 1909. Those were the times before such tiresome academic requirements as birth certificates, and Mother seemed to stoop easily to the deceit, and Dad must have winked at it, too.

Avondale School, near the corner of Topeka Avenue and 29th Street, a site now occupied by a swank shopping center, was then out in the open fields not too far from the little settlement of Pauline, and close to the southeast corner of the Topeka Country Club. Books, prescribed but not paid for by the State, and in the most revolting shades of buckram obtainable, were kept in the open drawer beneath the desk top, where everybody had his own ink bottle and steel pen. Columbus returning to Spain with the glories of the New World was not greeted with more astonishment than was Vera Hutchinson who showed up one day with something she called a fountain pen.

"*Fountain pen? You mean it holds its own ink?*"

Discipline was strict and to the point. We had a succession of teachers, notable among them a Mrs. Boyleston, a brooding, dark-haired female possessed of a short-fused temper. She kept a flexible rubber hose, of about the caliber commonly seen on douche bags, coiled about her waist like a pet viper, and when taunted beyond endurance would uncoil the hose and thrash the unlucky felon before our eyes.

There was no P.T.A. and no organized sports, and we happily played baseball, tag, marbles, mumblepeg and pum-pum-pullaway, while the girls skipped rope, chanting,

"I should worry, I should fret,  
I should marry a suffragette:  
He would die and I would cry,  
And I would marry another guy;"

Or:

"Mother, mother, I am sick,  
Send for the doctor, quick, quick, quick;  
Doctor, doctor, shall I die?  
Yes, my dear, but do not cry.  
How many carriages will there be?

"One, two, three, four,"

and so on, to "Red Hot Peppers" and exhaustion.

Off to one corner of the yard the boys regaled each other with folk tales:

"They say they'll give anybody ten thousand dollars to hold a

Stanley Steamer wide open for three minutes.”

“Jess Willard — they say he just dares anybody to come up and hit him as hard as he wants to in the stummick — it don’t hurt him a bit.”

“Mickey and his girl fucked so much, they just put them in a trunk and they fucked all the way to Oklahoma City.”

Summers we swam in the Shunganunga and in winter skated upon it, our skates strapped to the soles of our boots. We sharpened the skates ourselves, putting them into the anvil-vise in the cellar and going at them with a steel file. Dad was a great skater, and the rest of us wobbled around as best we could. Nobody ever bothered too much about thin or “rubber” ice, and when somebody tumbled in, it was scramble out again and warm your clothes by the fire. Summers then, we went swimming in the amber, sluggish, green-scummed water, shallow for the most part, but with swimming holes, each with its own name spaced along the length of the creek. There was the Ford, with its rope swing dangling from the big cottonwood, and the Basin with its slippery slide, and Mud-Bottom, into whose blue-black gunk you would sink to your knees. We swam dog-paddle style, and bare-assed naked except when the girls went along, which was seldom. Nobody taught you to swim, you sort of fooled around in the shallow water until it came to you; and once when I went under for the third time, the fatal third time during which your whole life flashed before you, somebody, it may have been Warren Leonard casually twined his fingers in my long hair and yanked me out.

Warren, about my age, lived with his family a block or so east of our house. He and his kid brother Reyburn, Rick and I, made up a neat foursome. We ran together all the time, padding along single-file through the horseweeds and nettles on the way to the swimming hole or to fish for crawdads, always in the order that we called “Here We Go,” an arrangement which would have delighted the heart of a social anthropologist: Warren went first, myself next; then came Rick, with Reyburn stumping along in the rear.

But there was more to life than fishing and swimming; there was also the Life of Culture, of The Higher Things. At various times all of us kids started “taking”; this meant music lessons, and Manon was probably the first to begin, with me a close second. She was the pianist, banging away at the old Marshall and Wendell golden-oak upright which was five feet tall and heavy as a full-grown ox, and which was probably tuned once every three or four years whether it needed it or not. I was fated to be the gypsy violinist, and to Monkey Wards we sent for a fiddle, enclosing a check for eleven dollars and a half; soon the instrument came to us, full-rigged with bow,

rosin, instruction book and extra set of strings. The exotic smell of rosin and fresh varnish came up all around us as we lifted the yellow-red violin, probably made by forest-gnomes in Czechoslovakia, out of the cardboard case. I first "took" from a Miss Gulden, riding into town, like Yankee Doodle, on a pony, with my violin strapped somewhere athwart the saddle. Miss Gulden was a gentle creature, young and fairhaired, with pendant guileless breasts which were visible beneath her camisole as I stood over her, she seated at the piano and marking the bowings.

"Now this is down-bow, and this is up-bow. Now, let's try it — one — two — three."

I was about twelve at the time, and never much of a tit-man anyway, so I took only a passing interest in this mammary display and concentrated as best I could on Hrimaly and Schradieck.

After a short time with Miss Gulden I joined Manon in studying with Daniel Bueller, who taught both violin and piano. He was a tall, cigar-loving "Dutchman," fierce and temperamental, and one of the best teachers in town. His charge was two dollars and a half a lesson, but this Dad paid cheerfully, even at a time when all four of us were studying and when Dad's salary was \$230.00 a month.

Daniel's great cachet with us gaping provincials though, was not his musical skill, but the fact that he had been divorced, and that he owned a Marmon run-about. We had never known a divorced person before, although without doubt there were plenty of tight-lipped marriages scattered around here and there; and we had never seen such a car, with its rumble seat, and glistening with hand-rubbed varnish the color of a Montmorency cherry. Rick and I whispered to each other that he'd been up to ninety in it, and this hulking beast still haunts my car-dreams, along with a Stutz Bearcat driven by country club sport Harlow Hurley, and the Pierce Arrow touring cars in front of the Antlers Hotel in Colorado Springs.

Rick soon learned that you could pick out a melody with the fingers of the right hand and make a few simple chords with the fingers of the left, and after a few years became a facile, happy-go-lucky player-by-ear.

"Don't try that Rick business with me," Daniel would growl in his Teutonic accent when I would attempt to slip past him some shoddy bit of noodling in "The Old Refrain" or the "Meditation" from *Thäis*.

Soon enough Jane "quit takin'," and Rick was lost to Art in favor of Popularity-and-Fun, but Manon and I persevered. In her I had a built-in accompanist, and I soon acquired *Violin Pieces the Whole World Plays*, and *Songs The Whole World Loves*, arranged for violin and piano. With these I sawed, stumbled and hacked my way

through the "Quartette" from *Rigoletto*, *Airs from Patience*, and, for Dad, "Killarney" and "I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls."

As Manon's technique improved, we all came more and more to gather around the piano in the lamplight and sing the evening away.

"Oh don't you remember Sweet Alice, Ben Bolt,

Sweet Alice whose hair was so brown;

She would quake with delight when you gave her a smile

And tremble with fear at your frown,"

— the very stuff to give the troops in those still male-dominated days. This sentimental bit of male chauvinism was from the old red-leatherette *Heart Songs*, but many we had by word of mouth — "Hush Little Baby, Don't Say a Word" from one of the McAfferty girls, and a few stray ones from Dad:

"Everybody works but Father

And he sits 'round all day,

Sits all day by the fire

Smokin' his pipe of clay;

Mother takes in washin',

And so does Sister Ann;

Yes, everybody works at our house

But my old man!"

Then, too there was sheet music, and this we bought at Jenkins Music Store at Topeka and Ninth or at dime stores, where the piano stood by the sheet music counter and where one of the clerks, usually a widow with tired eyes which had viewed rosier dawns, would play any piece on request. From this source we learned to bawl out the words and music to Carrie Jacobs Bond's "When You Come to the End of a Perfect Day," "Smile the While You Kiss Me Sad *Adoo*," and "Dear Heart, the World is Waiting for the Sunrise."

Once in a while Mother would come out with a tear-jerker from the Nineties, "Father, dear father, come home with me now/ The clock in the steeple strikes three," which would usually bring on a flood of tears from Manon. Even Dad got into the act, purchasing from God knows where an old six-keyed ebony flute on which he learned to tootle a few airs for his own amazement.

So much for our musical life; the literary one, was, for me at least, something else:

"Whenever he started a book with two solitary travelers riding along the brink of a desperate ravine he knew he was safe."

I don't know at what age I learned to read, but I can remember the first word that I learned to spell. It was the word "black," and I went around shouting "B-L-A-C-K," bringing the glad news to a



waiting world all up and down Fillmore Street. In later years Art Carney was to observe that introverts end up in show biz, and we shall speculate more about that later on. At any rate, I soon learned to read, and began at an early age to give Dad competition as the bookworm of the family: "Always got his nose in a book," was Mother's comment on the both of us, and perhaps both of us read from the same compulsion, slipping in and out of the looking-glass easy as a ghost.

In grade-school years my favorite out of our ten-volume set of *The Children's Hour* was *Legendary Heroes*, and here I soon identified with, among others, Siegfried, Beowulf and Roland. The stories were illustrated in half-tone, one of which showed Roland winding his horn in the pass at Roncesvalles, mounted on Valiant, in chain mail and with his hair blowing down the wind, with the heaps of slain paynims like dead leaves at his feet.

Along with all this, I became a literary hyena, who would read anything that was in print. Along with the chocolate-pudding prose of Charles Kingsley and Edward Everett Hale, not to mention the poetry of Kansas' own "Ironquill" and W. H. Caruth, I also gobbled up such fictional Karmel-Korn as *Freckles* and *The Girl of the Limberlost*, Jeffrey Farnol's *The Broad Highway*, most of the oeuvre of Harold Bell Wright and Horatio Alger, and all the Tom Swift books I could con off Shirley Wotton.

And then, around the middle of December, when the leaves were long gone from the big elms along Burlingame Road, Rick and I, coming down the long slope from Twenty-Ninth Street, would see It. There It would be. The Package, and one or two others like it, propped up amongst the mailboxes on the rack, too big to go into any of them. The minute we glimpsed it, we knew what it was, broke into a run and soon had it in our hands. We wouldn't open it until Christmas, of course, but we knew it was the *Boys Own Annual*, a six or eight pound quarto monster which contained all the previous year's copies of *The Boys Own Paper*. This delight, the English counterpart of our own *Boys Life*, together with *Chatterbox* or the *Girls Own Annual*, constituted our usual Christmas present from Uncle Hill.

Anyone will know how we felt; anyone, that is, who has followed Aladdin down into the cave to view the torchlight shining on the foot-lockers full of rubies, or who has, at the Dallas Chablis and Oyster Society, seen John Hurst uncorking a flagon of Romani Conti '63; any one of these will know how we felt when, after the postponement of gratification which is alleged to be one of the hallmarks of maturity, we at last opened the package beneath the tree on Christmas morning. Here, alongside regular features on chess

and stamp collecting, we found such blood-chilling serials as "Aztec Gold" and "The Lost City," together with stories of English public-school life which spoke a fascinating, arcane tongue, with casual mention of such matters as tuck-shops, fives courts, rotters, canings, and beastly cheek.

On all this, Rick and I lavished our attention for the next twelve months, reading the stories again and again, and by the time we had worn out the print, it was time for another volume.

Our periodicals were few and of no great consequence; *The Rural New Yorker*, *The Country Gentlemen* which was a Capper publication based in Topeka, *The Continent*, a Presbyterian church magazine, and *The Youth's Companion*, sent to us every year by Grampie Franey.

So the years passed until the early evening of May 13, 1921, when I stood on the platform at Avondale School, ready for graduation. I had come through the eight years in pretty fair shape, although not without some private torment and anguish, a few events which sound through the lavender mist like the fateful horns of some Wagnerian leit-motif, foretelling beastly things to come for the helden-tenor after the end of Act Two.

I had, for two or three years past, been having trouble with my arithmetic, having found something that was not susceptible to personal charm, and in the service of which I used to stand at the blackboard and cry, in an agony of frustration at not being able to tell how long it would take Little Ann (may she roast in Hell) to do her ironing. Then also, on another occasion, I was slapped across the face by Ollie Kershaw (may he roast there also, alongside Little Ann) and I did nothing about it only to slink away, not being at that stage acquainted with the phrase, "He's a lover, not a fighter"; having trouble then, but nobody thinking much about it, and myself least of all.

Well then, we had driven, all six of us, in the surrey, with my violin stashed away beneath the seat, to the graduation exercises. When it came my time to perform, Manon primly seated herself at the piano and I ostentatiously unfolded my music rack and spread out upon it the violin part for Hauser's "Lullaby." It was a simple-minded bit of fluff, mostly in the first position, and with no pizzicato or double-stops. Manon sounded the A for tuning, but I waved her aside with the air of Paganini about to perform at the court of the Princess of Lucca. Tuning was for peasants and slobs, not for us artistes. I proceeded then, only to break down after the third or fourth bar and to turn around and face my audience. "It isn't tuned," I said, and then only began to tune up and got through the piece somehow, but the agony of that moment is with me yet.

So the exercises were over at last, and we all rode back home behind Old Flo. At this particular fly-speck on the space-time continuum, I was thirteen, and had been raised in an atmosphere of rollicking good fun, close family affection and Presbyterian love-and-duty. I had never heard a political argument, beyond a chance remark of Dad's: When he was asked if he might be persuaded to cast a vote for Woodrow Wilson, his studied reply had been, "Well, I've never really thought much about it." I knew the tune and words to perhaps two hundred old songs, hymns and Christmas carols; I believed that you should always be kind and loving to all of God's creatures, with the possible exception of your sisters, and that it was safe to check your ego, not that I was familiar with the term, to somebody else so long as you were sure he had your best interests at heart; that Fritz Kriesler was the greatest violinist the world had ever seen; that you could cure nettle-sting with an application of blue mud; and that it was a fair trade if you got five potteries in trade for one aggie. I was a pretty good golf caddy, one who was appalled at the chicanery of some of my peers, who were not above tromping a "lost" ball into the mud, and then retrieving it the next day so as to present it blandly to the owner. ("Hey, Mr. Strickland, I found a ball with your name on it." "Well, well, now, son — glad to get it back — here's a quarter for your trouble.") I also nourished the conviction, although surely not in so many words, that the universe was basically hierarchical, static and monolithic, yet somehow, along with this I also cherished the belief that through love and obedience you could and should raise yourself to better things. I believed — but what matter —

Old Flo plodded on, past the rows of Osage-orange trees, past Lena's and Adelaide's, and Brosius' Corner, past the Rehkoﬀ's, and then, turning the corner by Ben Naylor's place, on west, up the hill between Mrs. Wingett's on the right and Old Man Bobbitt's on the left, and finally came to our own home, Taycroft-on-the-Hill. I probably helped unhitch the old mare and put her in the stall and then walked back to the house in what must surely have been a soft, full moon, a moon of promise; there being at this point the whole world ahead, and not, to anyone's eye, much of anything behind.

# # #

Charles Franey, as we have seen, was born in 1859. At that time nearly everybody in Canada or the United States lived on a farm, or got his living from one: You went to school for a few years, learned how to divide 1247 by 13, how to write a fair hand, and how to spell "niece" and "either." If you could construe a sentence, knew where Madagascar lay or who Shakespeare and Columbus were, so much the better. Then, by the time you were sixteen, you were ready for a little courtin', knowing that as soon as you popped the question, either her old man or yours would fence off the north forty and cut out a good bull and a few cows from the herd: The neighbors would come and build you some sort of house and barn, dance at your wedding, and shivaree you later in the evening while you were on the featherbed inside, fumbling with the buttons on the bride's new flannel nightgown.

Grampie Franey then, who had been "allowed to go to school winters," married early, and his wife was bearing children before he was twenty-two. To him and to his generation, the Victorian ground-rules concerning sex not only made good sense but worked pretty well in the bargain.

By the time I had said fare-thee-well to Avondale School, the sexual revolution of the Twenties was just getting up a head of steam, but so far as any of us on the farm were concerned, it was still standing in the station. None of us kids were ever Told Anything, and the only mentions of sex were whispers concerning Old Man Jenkins and his housekeeper, who were, according to Mother, "living together as man and wife," and the carryings-on of Mrs. Van Deusen with her brother-in-law, for which Dad dubbed her Polyandra behind her back.

The Summer of 1921, the year of my graduation, I was thirteen, and our hayloft was on the second story of the old weatherbeaten barn. It was a large roomy loft, odorous with loose alfalfa and baled timothy, and with the scent of the stables below, where Old Flo and Nig stamped in their stalls. It was a wonderful place to read on rainy afternoons, with the drops pattering on the iron roof, and as I was to discover that summer, for other pastimes as well.

It was here that a dark-eyed lively sprite of fifteen, one Delia

Arbuckle "from the Flats," showed Manon how to skin the cat. It was simple, and Manon had seen us boys to it a hundred times, as we caught hold of a tree limb with both hands and then brought our legs up between our arms and so came back to the ground. She had doubtless done it herself, but not in the hayloft, nor before an exclusively male audience, nor without bloomers. The game was for the gaping males in the audience to see if they could spank the rounded, firm, little country-girl butts as they came up over the horizontal joist; and when that paled, there was the game of Doctor and Patient which quickly deteriorated into a lamentable breach of professional ethics. To parody Pierre Bousquet, "It was magnificent, but you must not call it sex"; nobody had any climaxes, and it was a matter of getting on top of the girls in the soft and odorous hay, pumping up and down a few times and then going behind some bales of hay which were stacked up in one corner for the sake of modesty, to rest up for the next bout. I didn't know we were doing anything wrong, but this belief was not shared by the older members of the family.

The game went on for weeks, and some of the others were hard at it one afternoon, when the patriarchal head of Father Tay poked itself up through the trap door. One of the boys left the group by air, leaping out of the door to the ground twelve feet below, and ere long Mother came to me, sitting in all innocence on the front porch munching an apple.

"You've got to tell me what you've been doing out there in the barn all summer," she said in a voice strangled with fury, coming toward me with a dime-store paring-knife and unwittingly furnishing a rare, literal text-book case of the Castrating Female. "Tell me, right now, or I'll cut it off of you, Down There, — right now —."

I turned white as a ghost and managed to stammer out some sort of plea of guilty before the court without much hope of probation. This experience colored, as we shall see, the rest of my life; but the immediate result was that for the rest of the summer the yards of the neighborhood kids were declared Off Limits to Enlisted Personnel, and Delia passed out of my sight, but not out of my life-stream, forever.

With that episode behind me, Dad took me down to register for high school on September 3, 1921. The location of Topeka High was familiar to me, it being across the street from the Capitol grounds and around the corner from the First Presbyterian Church. Its two red brick buildings faced each other across Eighth Street near Harrison, and the students sauntered casually from one to the other, avoiding without much difficulty the amiable, puttering traffic of the times. I signed up for orchestra, where I was to spend four happy

but inglorious years sawing valiantly away at the um-ta-ta second-violin parts of "The Stars and Stripes Forever," "Zampa," and "The Light Cavalry Overture."

I also signed up for what was to be a four-year hitch in Latin, spurning all modern foreign tongues as beneath the notice of one who, as a lawyer, was to spend his time discoursing in the purest Ciceronian.

That's about all there was to my freshman year, beyond my indifferent grades which were likewise a matter of indifference to the family, but not too long after the end of the first semester, on February 11, 1922, I was fourteen, and soon after that, found sex once more rearing its lovely head.

Here, in the outdoor privy which had a window open to the rain and the snow, to say nothing of the stares of the passerby, I began to notice, in the phrase of Balzac, that "one arose that was not called," and I soon discovered the delightful pastime of tearing off a strip of paper from the Montgomery Ward catalogue and seeing if I could guess to what heights the rising beauty would attain. It was really a many-splendored thing, although I was not to realize this for many a decade, round and hard as the upper six inches of a hoe handle, and warm and throbbing in my hand like a moon rocket in the last stages of the count-down.

As I have said, we had been Told Nothing, and any Biblical references concerning the Seventh Commandment, or so far as that goes, Onan, or even establishing beautiful friendships with the beasts of the field, had left us cold.

As one might guess, it was not too long before it happened, and for the first but not the last time I felt the surging, slamming, unholy joy of the orgasm and saw the hot, white fluid spurting out like a gusher at Spindletop.

"Oh God," I whispered, "this must be what they make babies out of," knowing instinctively that anything which gave this much pleasure just had to be sinful, and at the same time, Mother's warning on the porch came back to me like a swat across the face with a two-by-four.

"Oh God, forgive me," I prayed, cleaning things up as best I could and creeping out of the privy into the open air.

I continued in this way, sinning, asking forgiveness, and then going back for some more sinning, all summer. Sometimes I went through this cycle four or five times a day, and without any fantasies; but that Fall, Nina Colbert soon enough took care of all that.

In Miss Schnacke's English class we all sat in a circle, and opposite to me sat, or rather lounged, Nina. She was a girl of a wanton, provocative manner (for all that she was double-chinned and slightly

bug-eyed), and the possessor of a pair of heliotrope bloomers. Of these she displayed a fascinating stretch, sitting with her legs crossed and one knee cocked high in the air, and on occasion (were those the days when the purple pants went to the wash?), showing above her rolled stocking—tops nothing but a pair of plump and winking thighs. To this day I do not know a word of “Marmion” or “Lady of the Lake,” but I can tell you every seam and wrinkle in those bloomers, gathered so fetchingly below the knee, and the look of devilish amusement on Nina’s face as she watched my lustful stares. These visions of loveliness soon began cropping up in my panting, guilty reveries in the privy, and in my wet dreams as well, and I have remained a jolly legman to this day.

“Then felt I like some watcher of the thighs!” I felt like shouting upon first looking into Keats’ sonnets, and somewhat later was happy to discover myself in the company of such distinguished voyeurs as King David and Socrates:

“And from the roof he saw a woman washing herself, and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.”

And, in a less heterosexual mood and half a millenia later,

“And at that moment all the people in the palaestra crowded about us, and oh rare! I caught a sight of the inwards of his garment and took the flame.”

Be that as it may, it was about this time, that the nightmares began, and I would awake shouting, at the white-garbed figure at my bedside, or after a reverie of soaring, pushing myself up into the air like a swimmer bringing himself to the surface, up Above Them All, only to find that I was jetting up into orbit, with the earth spinning below me like a top: “There, there, Loki, it’s just a dream,” Mother would call from her bed at the far end of the sleeping porch, and I would go back to sleep, perchance to wet-dream of Manon or of Nina and what lay above those black stocking tops.

Then, too there was the matter of homesickness, or as I called it, The Terror.

“Lonesome, homesick and mud,” reads a despairing note in Mother’s diaries for this period, and perhaps some of this I caught, as one would a common cold.

We would be in Monticello or perhaps visiting Aunt Carrie Bilbrey in Alabama, anywhere would serve, but with the family all around me, still a giant hand would clamp down on my vitals and I would stumble out of the room to go and weep somewhere alone, for what I knew not, but with the vision always of being back home, of walking alone down the road to the Leonards’, perhaps to get Warren to go swimming, clad in brown coveralls over a light summer union suit, barefoot, slightly pot bellied, with a sea captain’s tan

and no hat, with my hair, after one of Dad's homemade haircuts, blowing in the wind.

The homesick spells however, would be over in a day or so, and in any case, the summer trips, accomplished on trip passes and invariably by day coach, were glorious if sooty adventures.

At the mention of journeys by rail, let no one indulge in the image of trains as they were in their Indian Summer, which saw such wallowings in luxury as Diesel locomotives, air-conditioning, stewardesses, and adjustable reclining seats.

No, the passenger trains of my youth were pulled by black, coal-burning monsters equipped with mournful poetic steamwhistles and with driving wheels tall as a Viking chieftain. Behind them clattered the baggage coaches, a smoking car with its black leatherette seats, the day coaches and then the Pullmans, with perhaps a club car or diner at the rear. We rested, if that is the word, our butts on hard-cushioned benches upholstered in some prickly, dark-red implacable material redolent of the rain of dust and cinders which blew in through the open windows. Twelve-inch electric fans roared ineffectually at either end of the car, above the signs for the toilets, Men and Women. These signs were reversible, set on spindles so that male passengers always went forward to pee, while the females retired genteelly to the rear. The scent of orange peel thrown into the disinfectant of spittons and the smell of fried chicken and peanut butter sandwiches brings it all back — together with the memory of the lordly conductor in shiny blue serge, the news butch with his copies of *The Pictorial Review* and *The Literary Digest*, and the brakeman who bawled the names of oncoming stations over our sleeping heads.

On these trips, toting wet bathing suits, and in Dad's scornful phrase, "shoe-boxes full of grub," between trains we would traipse through the art galleries of Boston, New York and Chicago, and at our destination, park for weeks on end with tolerant friends and relations. Most of these folk had by now outlived their horse-and-buggy days, and perhaps it was from their example that, early in the Twenties, we acquired our first automobile.

Our vehicle, which my friend Scoop Gardner nicknamed The Ark, was a fearsome juggernaut with a black "satin" finish, a product of the makers of the famous Studebaker farm wagon, and in the matter of comfort retaining many of its features. A 1916 touring car, it boasted a black horsehide top which stood man-high and a hood that ran six feet or so from the dashboard to a squared-off radiator. Beneath the hood, its engine sported six "straight" cylinders, and between each spark plug was mounted a brass petcock. Into these cups on frosty mornings we poured raw gasoline which was thus let



down into the very bowels of the creature, and soon enough the engine would fire up with a throaty roar and a blast of blue exhaust smoke.

The upholstery was of black leather, rolled and pleated after the fashion of sports cars, and the two little folding jump seats in the rear were to our eyes clubby as hell since they were usually seen only on funeral cars.

Our purchase, for one hundred and twenty-five good, round, Harding dollars, was made through Frank Belfry, son of Old Jake. The owner was in Emporia, and thither Dad, Rick and I went by train one Sunday in early October, 1922, to arrive back at the farm late in the afternoon, with Frank at the wheel of our proud and chugging purchase. Fortunately this maiden voyage, my first trip, at fourteen, by automobile, was without incident; as we were soon to learn. The Ark possessed a mysterious adjunct to the power-train known as a torque-arm, and this member had a most unsportsmanlike habit of slipping out of joint and banging down on the pavement.

"Boys," Dad would say, turning to Rick and me with a look of infinite sorrow, and the air of one leading a charge against hopeless odds, "boys, get out the tools"; and we would dismount and wriggle around on the grimy asphalt for an hour or two until the arm had somehow been slipped back into place.

Anybody who assumes that when we acquired the car, we thereupon disposed of the horse, just simply has not yet got the word on our family. No — in the same spirit that we kept one good violin when Daniel Bueller sold me a better one; in the same spirit that we kept for years a paint pony which nobody could ride; we simply kept Flo on, driving her occasionally to town when the car was laid up for repairs. Finally, though, Flo was sold off and with her went the buggy. Old Man Bobbitt was the inheritor of this conveyance, in a transaction which throws some light on the Weltpolitik of Taycroft-on-the-Hill. On one of his visits to us from his house a block away, the salty old character had offered to buy the buggy, and Dad, who possessed the bargaining savoir faire of the Vicar of Wakefield, had sold it to him for a dollar. When Mother heard about this she made Dad renege on his trade. And that was that, except that it must have sunk a harpoon into Dad's soul, and into that of at least one other member of the family as well.

On another occasion likewise, Dad, having learned to drive in an open field the day after the purchase, was taking his family for a spin, and stopping at Frank Belfry's house, harmlessly bumped the rear of another car parked at the curb. The owner, a fiery tempered young lout, boiled out of the house and treated Dad to a tongue-lashing in front of his entire family. Dad, who could have taken the

young man apart with his bare hands, sat impassively at the wheel, making no comment except one to the effect that perhaps the owner's fury was caused by our having an old car in contrast to his new one, and then, when we finally drove away, "Are they going to put Daddy in prison?" Manon whispered, and we all drove down to Baughman's for an ice cream cone. This incident was a matter of little moment to Mother, whose diary for October 21, 1922, contains the entry,

"Belfries" (the plural, obviously, of Belfry) "took us all in car on Silver Lake Road, Struck Newbury car. Fun? Home safe. Read and bathed and retired early."

All during these years the Y.M.C.A. played a large part in my life. During the summers I went to Camp Kee Wah Kee, half a dozen or so miles south of town, where board was a dollar a day, and we hiked, held snipe hunts, ran foot races, prayed, and swam in the lake. Here also, one of our counselors, a pre-med. student whom we knew as Doc Smith, brought along a musical instrument which looked like a guitar that had not kept up its vitamins.

"Ukelele," said Doc, sitting cross-legged in the camp-firelight, and striking up,

"My mother-in-law, she is dead,

Um titty um tum tay;

She got caught in a folding bed,

Um titty um tum tay.

Ever since my mother-in-law's been dead,

Folks come around to me and want to buy that bed;

For they all have mother-in-laws they say.

Um titty um tum

Um titty um tum

Um titty um tum tay."

One day Doc gave us the boiler-plate sex-lecture of the times, complete with its lurid verbal chromo of babbling, whey-faced Creatures That Once Were Men, shackled to the walls of insane asylums, the victims of Scarlet Women or of The Secret Sin. Everybody knew what habit this last phrase referred to, and Doc warned us that its practitioners could be spotted by their flagging step and listless eye.

"You can tell these people when you meet them on the street," Doc warned, and I find it difficult to stare into a mirror, to this very day.

On another occasion, seated on the outdoor john alongside Charlie Massingill, one of the adult camp counselors, I told him everything, my sin and my struggle for salvation, asking for bread, but receiving instead only a stone.

"You'll just have to ask Christ to help you break the habit," he

intoned, when he might better have suggested that I go back to town and see what Nina Colbert was doing these summer evenings.

In spite of all this youthful Sturm and Drang, the four years between June 1921 and June 1925, the years of high school, all seem to have had the same texture, like a well-baked angel-food cake.

When school was out, at quarter to three I would drift up to the second floor of the City Library, then a two-story building of red and gray granite located on the State Capitol grounds. The magazine room was presided over by a handsome gentlewoman with silvery upswept hairdo and dubious breath, and it was there that I became acquainted for the first time with the old *Life* and *Judge*, along with *College Humor*. All these periodicals, although they did not know it, were in their twilight phase, and with them, likewise, was slinking to its final rest the two-and three-line joke. It is with one effort that one recalls some of these thigh-slappers, and with another that one attempts to forget them:

"Flapper: Are you fond of Kipling?

Jellybean: I don't know; how do you kipple?"

This might represent a joke from *Judge* or *Life*, which catered pretty much to the family trade; but in *College Humor* you could run across an occasional morsel of "blue" humor which was hard to find outside of it or *Captain Billy's Whizbang*:

"First Cake-eater: I understand Bill's new sweetie is from Maine.

Second Nit-wit: Bangor?

First Cake-eater: Nope. They're just friends."

In *College Humor* I first struck up a nodding acquaintance with the Roaring Twenties. Here, in the sagas of the Montross writing team I could follow the adventures of a legendary character named Andy Prothero. Andy was a B.M.O.C., a Big Man on the Campus, who inhabited a world of hip flasks and low sleek roadsters, who consorted with willowy great-eyed gazelle-like creatures named Cynthia or Diane, and whose domain was as far removed from Berlin Heights as that of Samarkand or Cathay.

The wit and humor, if that is what it was, along with the glamor, boiled in my veins, and it would be already past four o'clock and time to pick up my papers for the route and head for South Topeka in the rain.

South Topeka was a lower middle-class neighborhood, to which I took the streetcar, giving the motorman a free copy of *The Topeka State Journal* in lieu of a fare, and folding my papers for throwing as I rode. The route was not long, and with my good stout farm-legs, in no way tiresome. I did my collecting on Saturdays, getting my first but not my last experience at credit management, keeping

the customers up to snuff, and cutting off the dead-beats as the need arose. It brought in a good steady thirty or forty dollars a month which I spent casually here and there, on Blatz Grape soda pop or on caramel Pekano bars.

For some reason I gave up the route for a while and turned it over to Rick, but soon had to take it back and make it pay once more. I, the bookworm and dreamer, found myself the realist after all, and perhaps it is true that those with guilty consciences make the best credit men and detectives.

Then, on Sunday mornings we drove to church, the family of us, all six, sitting in a line like crows perched on a telephone wire, in a pew near the front but to the left of the minister. Stephen Sewall Estey, B.A. (Oberlin), L.L.B., D.D., bald, learned, portly, preached in full morning fig, in cutaway and gatesajar collar. His handsome massive features were reminiscent of the more forbidding portraits of Henry James, and once on a Sunday morning he sent my friend Buzz Elder scooting home for his jacket so as to be decently clad in the House of the Lord. His doctrine, as comfortable as his mahogany-and-red-velvet pews, was a genteel faith-and-works salvationism with nary a whiff of brimstone. His church, which had been erected of good gray Calvinist granite back in 1884, had room for a thousand souls in its dim-lit panelled interior, and was built for all eternity. The leaded windows, executed by the Tiffany Studios of New York in rare and glowing Fravile glass, depicted the Savior as a handsome dark-haired Nordic track-star, endowed with the sensitive but flashy features of John Barrymore or Francis X. Bushman.

So to church then, we all trooped, the six of us, every Sunday morning, and thither at dusk Manon and I returned for Christian Endeavor. Here, in the church parlor, after cocoa and doughnuts below stairs, we prayed, sang hymns and gave little talks to one another on Duty, and on the Nature of True Happiness. Looking back on it, it seems to me that we were all happy but earnest savages together, Coming of Age in Topeka.

For during this time we ran in packs, like high-minded wolves, boys and girls together, and all the time I was in high school I had but one date. This was at the end of my senior year, on a clear, moon-drenched night in the Spring of 1925. I had asked Marjorie Belson to go to a high school operetta, starring Venice Adams and "Beef" King. My first date was a major event in our family, and everybody flocked to the door to see me off.

"Ah, in such a night," quoth my father, standing at the door like an old baron seeing his son off to the Crusades, and slipping me a couple of bucks for an evening's debauchery, " — 'in such a night stood Dido with a willow in her hand/Upon the wild sea banks and

waft her love/ To come again to Carthage'."

I trudged on down the hill, naturally not being deemed capable of piloting The Ark, and boarded the Country Club street car.

Marjorie was a blonde vivacious creature with bobbed hair, of high Christian principles and with a crisp executive manner. She was famous in Christian Endeavor as having a new Buick, an Orthophonic Victrola, and a stack of records which included Gene Austin's "My Blue Heaven."

I do not recall much of the date, except that my high state of ecstasy was tempered by the state of shock into which I slipped when Marjorie casually mentioned that she had been to a dance.

A *dance!* At this time I was President of the high school Y.M.C.A., the Hi-Y, and there or elsewhere had picked up the idea that dancing was sinful. A dance! I bore the news with the noble sorrow which must have suffused the mind of Arthur when the word was brought to him that Guenevere and Lancelot were playing kneesie-kneesie beneath the Round Table. Next day I reported the incident to Manon.

"You must be mistaken," she said. "Marjorie would never go to a *dance*," both of us picturing a gin-soaked revel involving tailor-made cigarettes, road houses, and heavy necking in rumble seats.

"A girl should be a pal to a fellow, not a sweetheart," Mrs. Mas-singill had commented one day at our house, on seeing Rick and Kopi Morrison strolling hand in hand through the grape arbor. This advice, which echoed the sentiments of Mother Tay who lived in hourly terror that her sons would have their lives ruined by designing females, I apparently followed during my high school days. During those times, I had only the one date that I have mentioned, although entire summers were spent in mooning over the charms of various houris whom I did not dare call on the telephone. It was during this time, however, that I formed three male friendships which seemed destined to outlast the sun.

The first of these was with Rick, whose flesh seemed my flesh and his blood my blood; we swam, joked, philosophized, rode bicycles, wrestled, and trudged through the mud together, and I suppose I have loved him, now long since gone, more than anyone else in this world.

Hans Tirpitz though, was something else. Hans, who later on was to raise himself effortlessly to the peerage with the addition of a "von" which was as phony as Balzac's "de," was over six and a half feet tall and a swaggering romantic after my own heart.

His family was the only one I knew that enjoyed the big-city glamor of living in an apartment, and in a Bohemian one at that, where one sat on the floor at parties and where one was not above

knocking together a set of bookshelves from two-by-twelves and odd bricks picked up casually from building sites.

Instead of Longfellow and Tennyson, their poets were such upstarts as Sandburg and Millay, and their novelists Dreiser, James Branch Cabell, Sinclair Lewis, and a little later on, some Johnny-come-lately named Hemingway.

"Hey, guy, listen to this," Hans would call from the depths of *The American Mercury* or the Modern Library edition of *Penguin Island*, "it's wonderful stuff." He and his tall, grave, beautiful sister Marlene, bought reproductions of Picasso and Marie Laurencin, and tossed around words like swell, lousy, and grand; they boasted a wind-up portable phonograph along with Red Seal records, and slept on studio couches which were covered during the day with India prints.

Hans, like me, was a hiker, and we roamed the woods together, quoting A. E. Housman and *Cyrano*, and fencing with rapiers of dried horseweed. ("And as I end the refrain — thrust home!")

Buzz Elder though, was something else again. Buzz' father, like that of Hans, was dead, and both of them, as Mother put it, "had to work." For Buzz this was no chore; he was a born doer-and-goer, and already a Babbitt at sixteen. His records were "Who," and "The Tiger Rag," and his smile that of a Rotarian greeter. He was devoted to our family, whose house during these years buzzed with visitors, and he, like many another, fell under Mother's charm.

I see him now, with excited green eyes and lacquered sand-colored hair, clad in madly-checked plus-fours and Argyll socks, organizing a C. E. wienie roast or whipping the volunteer Hi-Y waiters together for the installation banquet of the Girl Reserves. He had enjoyed some stay on the West Coast and had returned with tall tales of life as it was lived in L. A. ("I guess you know, that stands for Los Angeles.")

He was a man who would swim the river for you at midnight, and often helped Rick or me with the paper route, although it was a matter of infinite sorrow to Mother that neither Hans, nor for that matter, any of the other friends of mine, had any eyes for either of her two daughters.

This was only natural, for both my sisters, Manon, two years older, and Jane, five years younger, were raised as second-class citizens and were outfitted accordingly. My sisters then, remained shadowy, ill-clad figures, spear-carriers in the family opera, with Mother and me subconsciously bitter rivals for the spotlight, and with Rick and Dad cast in strong supporting roles.

Then, on June 5th, 1925, four years after my Avondale commencement, I walked across a platform and once more received a

diploma, this time from Topeka High School. For the event, I was sporting a new double-breasted blue serge suit, for which I had also bought cream-colored flannels, the material meant by its color for summer wear, but of a texture to withstand the blasts of Labrador. I had got the outfit to appear as Dick in the senior play, *Nothing But the Truth*. My performance did little to advance the cause of the stage in Shawnee County: "You still just don't know how to *walk*," our director, a tall, winsome creature with ginger-colored hair, had stormed at me during dress rehearsal.

I was an actor then, but not even a ham; a fiddler, but not a violinist. I had enough Latin to make out the inscriptions on old tombstones and states' mottoes, and I knew who Warren G. Harding and Rudyard Kipling were, but not, though it were to save myself from being hanged, Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, Igor Stravinsky, Herman Melville, George Bernard Shaw, or, so far as that goes, George Gershwin or F. Scott Fitzgerald. I knew Walt Whitman only from "Oh Captain! My Captain!" and Edgar Allen Poe only from "The Bells," and had read little of any worth beyond *Ivanhoe* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

I had still, at seventeen, not been to more than a score of movies, nor listened to a radio except once or twice, and then through the earphones of Warren Leonard's crystal set; I had never been in a fight, nor taken a drink, nor smoked a cigarette; neither had I ever kissed a girl or fondled a thigh, for all that in sexual fantasy I strolled interminably through rolling acres of odalisques who were ravishingly clad in camisoles, black lisle hose and white cotton bloomers.

I had a kind and loving disposition, especially when not crossed, and believed that devotion, obedience and trust, like pure love in the movies, Would Conquer All. I knew that Jesus was my personal savior. I secretly yearned for power and fame, without seeing any necessary connection between them and hard work, integrity, or even talent or ability. From seeing, but in no way understanding Mother's "lonesome, homesick" agonies which by then had returned or perhaps had never really been away, I felt that growing up involved having "troubles," and from this reached the not surprising but highly inflammable notion that it would be best never to do so.

On the physical side, I was a strong but clumsy swimmer, and could hike six or eight miles without any trouble at all. I had become a fair hand with ax and cross-cut saw, and from being on the farm where mostly you did something yourself or it didn't get done, I had developed some sense of self-reliance and the almost entirely mistaken idea that anybody could do anything.

It was needless to say that none of this was borne in upon me

that night as we rolled up to the house ("Hey, Dad, see if you can get it up the hill in high") and all trooped in to bed. I was closing out an era, and ready to move on; and the family, in another sense, was getting ready to do the same.

# # #





9.

In 1865, Washburn College started out in life as Lincoln College, but upon receipt of a gift from Ichabod Washburn, had soon enough consented to be named after the Great Donor rather than the Great Emancipator. After a few years of store-front existence in downtown Topeka, it had moved a mile or so southwest of town to what the writers of the period would have called "a gentle eminence," in what later became College Heights; and by the time I enrolled, in 1925, it was well launched on its career.

In those days there was no fuss or fury involved in entering the Halls of Ivy, no S.A.T. scores or agonizing over attaining the "college of your choice." For enrollment you needed only a high school diploma and fifty bucks or so for the entrance fee, and there you were.

Washburn College, which has since become Washburn University of Topeka, with computerized enrollment, an N.A.A.C.P. Club, a nine-hole golf course, student teaching in Mexico, and academic semesters at the Sorbonne, was, when I strolled through its red-stone portals in September, 1925, a small liberal arts college of seven hundred or so, an elm-shaded enclave, an academically-oriented country-club for the well-to-do.

Although less than ten percent of my high school senior class went on to college, still many of the same faces were here also, and there was no jarring transition from one school to the other. And then, too Manon was there to enroll along with me, she as a sophomore and I as a freshman.

In my two years there I was pretty much of a C student, which again caused no one, least of all myself, any undue concern. In an age which had as one of its cornball jokes the definition of a college-bred man as one who had completed a four-year loaf, there was no special emphasis on grades, at least so far as I could tell, and I drifted through courses in rhetoric, Shakespeare, Latin, algebra and analytical geometry, without, as you might say, anybody laying a glove on me. Somewhere in there I warmed a chair in a music-appreciation course where I heard the names of Ravel and Debussy for the first time, after studying the violin for five years, and in my second year I signed up for courses in economics and of all things, labor problems.

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As one who had the social conscience of a goat, who had heard of race riots but believed that they were disturbances in some way connected with unpleasant happenings at horse-racing events, and who knew of CAPITAL and LABOR only through cartoons in *The Literary Digest*, these last-named courses were eye-openers to me.

My professor was a wiry, sandy-haired little pistol named Irwin, a former Scottish coal miner with the fervor and rhetoric of a Carlyle. He was regarded as a harmless nut and labelled a calamity howler, for prophesying that in a few years the country was in for a serious business depression. In later years he was reported doing very well for himself as a economist for one of the big banks in New York. In his courses I heard for the first time the socialist doctrine, albeit of a mild stamp, and of such magazines as *The Nation* and *The New Republic*, periodicals which had somehow escaped the attention of the dedicated student of *Judge* and *College Humor*.

Another course which was as novel to me as it must have been to its times was one called Mental Hygiene, taught by a tall, black-haired, very nervous young doctor by the name of Karl Menninger. Once he sent Warren Bolander and me out of class for giggling, perhaps over a copy of *Captain Billy's Whizbang*, and in later years I have sometimes wondered if perhaps I had paid more attention to Karl and less to Captain Billy — but if we pause for regrets we shall never see noon an' the cool, shady crick.

Yes, here in college I met men of dash and color, and the last I shall mention is Elrick B. Davis. He was a man of thirty or so, with a seamed and bitter face, a blond crew-cut and a caustic manner. He had been gassed in the war, so the rumor ran, and sat unconventionally on the top of his desk, with his knees drawn up and his ballocks plainly outlined beneath the tautly-drawn, shiny blue-serge pants.

"The man who wrote this is an ass, and only God can change him," he would grind out with a cynical smile, holding up some poor devil's freshman theme, perhaps mine, and adding, "will someone kindly escort the unfortunate perpetrator of this alleged essay into the Y.M.C.A. room for a session of silent prayer?" Or perhaps, with a copy of the Great Green Bible of the intelligentsia, H. L. Mencken's *American Mercury* visible on his office desk, would pontificate, "*The American Magazine* is lower than the floor."

I had never met anyone like these men, with the possible exception of George Hughes. George was the son of Thomas Hughes, an Eminent Victorian who had penned *Tom Brown's School Days* and *Tom Brown at Oxford*, and who accordingly impressed us immensely. George was a short, vociferous, red-haired man, the only one of our entire acquaintance who sported a beard; he was a great

lover of life, and a single-taxer to boot. His gold-rimmed glasses askew on his nose and his red beard wagging, his "English" accent sounding strange in our ears, he would expound Henry George to us by the hour, which we took in as though listening to a lecture on heraldry carried on in Swahili. ("It's the un-earned increment, doncha see, demmit, the un-earned increment.")

One of George's children had a ukelele, and from her I learned a few chords and some songs, and once again heard a whisper, however faint, of the Roaring Twenties:

"I'm gonna build me a castle  
painted green and white;  
Have a bull-fest every night;  
Skeleton bones all over the floor,  
Phi Beta crest painted over the door.  
Gonna marry a girl from old K.U.,  
Her blood's gonna change from red to blue;  
Gonna entertain royalty ev'ry night,  
In my castle painted green and —  
In my castle painted green and —  
In my castle painted green and white."

Before long, both Rick and I acquired ukes, and my violin practice, such as it was, at last began to pay off. Soon we could get through "Ukelele Lady," "They Cut Down The Old Pine Tree," and unconscious of its oedipal overtones, "Tie Me to your Apron Strings Again." With those three, along with a dozen or so others all done in fine barbershop style, we would sit on the front porch or around a campfire in the woods, strumming and singing the evening away.

From Helen Stehan, a winsome brunette with a pretty figure and a sweet fairy-fay voice, I had not only the words and the uke chords to "Moonlight Bay," but also my first kiss.

"How's about a smacker?" I blurted out, standing in the warm dusk of her front porch, and saluted her clumsily on the lips and then ran down the steps, not staying for an answer.

During this time, I did not date many girls, but continued to run with a pack as of yore, and at the end of my second school year, in June 1927, drifted out of Washburn College as casually as I had drifted in, with no regrets on either side.

# # #

In the Spring of 1925, Parkinson's Laws, although as yet unwritten, were nevertheless in full force and effect. One of these, that no institution is decadent until it finds itself adequately housed, was unsuspected by the Tay family but it had been in operation all along, lying in wait you might say, for eleven years.

Since 1914, we had been blithely building up our sweat-equity in Taycroft. Calling on professional help only in the sorest necessity, we had over the years put in hardwood floors, a bay window and a sleeping porch, and had installed an electric light plant, indoor plumbing and a wood-burning fireplace. That only about half the time was there sufficient cistern water for the plumbing, and that the fireplace drew well only when the wind was in a certain quarter, we took in our stride: A mirror framed in blood-red mahogany stood over the mantel, and on the leading-edge of the mantel itself our commercial artist friend, Herbert Joblen had inscribed a Latin motto in Gothic gold leaf. "*Laetus Sorte Mea*," it read, "Happy in My Lot," — or, in Shirley Wotton's cynical translation, "Let Us Sort the Meat." This, and another saying, "The gold, Dan, it was not worth it," served as official mottoes for the family, whatever private ones were reserved in secret or buried in the sub-conscious.

Well, things were shaping up nicely at home then, and the same was true at the office. In 1925, Dad was forty-seven, and had climbed slowly up the ladder from Clerk and Inspector, to being Chief Rate Clerk in the General Freight Office. His salary had come along also, from eighty-five dollars a month in 1908 to two hundred and forty in 1925, although sometimes it may have been heard to mutter to itself, "My God, how those snails are whizzing by!"

Over the years, he had become a skillful and trusted expert in the field of freight rates, being a man who kept his peace and who knew what he was about. True, he was suspect for harboring bookish, not to say poetic sentiments, but these were apparently viewed with amused toleration.

"Howard," they said to him once at a rate hearing in St. Louis, "some day we're just going to lock you up in the public library here and go back to Topeka without you."

It was May 1925, then, my last month in high school, and at

Dad's office there were alarums and excursions, portents, and vasty rumblings in the bureaucratic deep. All these, Mother promptly if inaccurately, recorded on her psychic seismograph.

"Dad picked up Jane and then went back to office," runs her entry for May 11, 1925; "office pulling off all dirty stunts." But then, only a short nine days later, we find,

"Up early and talking of Amarillo. Yesterday Mr. Tay got an offer to a position there, and he and I will go down and look it over."

Amarillo started out as Ragtown, a huddle of buffalo-hide huts on the shores of Wild Horse Lake, set down spang in the middle of the Texas Panhandle. Here on the High Plains, the buffalo-hunters and mustangers had foregathered half a century before; here it was dry and windy; the brick-red currents of the Canadian River swirled a few miles north; New Mexico lay not too far to the West, and Oklahoma to the North and East.

By 1925 it was a boom-town of twenty-five or thirty thousand, busting out of its britches and rarin' to go. The old cattle and wheat barons were punching holes in their flat, dusty acres and finding not only oil, but helium and natural gas to boot. Amarillo, the trading center, where the railroads all crossed, was a Southwestern town, all right, but more Western than Southern, and here, many of the houses still had their water tower and windmill in the back yard, while the yellow dust blew along the gravelled streets and about the boot-heels of the cowpokes squatting in front of the Amarillo Hotel.

This was the Llano Estacado, the Staked Plains of Coronado, cold and flat as a marble slab, a land as remote to all of us as Siberia or Peru, but this time, with the offer of a sixty-dollar a month raise, there was none of that high-falutin "We-did-not-want-to-go-there" talk.

Dad and Mother both went down to spy out the lay of the land and the look of the people, and on May 23rd, three days after the offer had been made, it was accepted. Dad moved out of Topeka for good, probably about the time of my graduation on June 5th. I visited him in Amarillo soon after, taking my violin and, after the fashion of Heifetz or Fritz Kreisler on tour, traveling with my own accompanist. Shirley Wotton, a tall, gangling boy of my age, who could bang out a pretty fair piano part to "Home to Our Mountains" or "Oh Suzanna!" went with me, and together we roamed around town, Dad putting us up at his boarding house near Tenth and Fillmore. The day after our arrival, my father proudly walked me down to the Santa Fe Offices, a sprawling, two-story fire-trap near the Santa Fe Depot, and I was impressed to see that here for the first time he had his own private office.

"Gets awfully lonely in here, though," he said wistfully, fingering

a row of black call-buttons on his glass-topped desk and gazing out at the tumbleweed in the yard. Then in a few days I was off, to Colorado or back to Topeka, and before long, had enrolled in my freshman year at Washburn.

By this time, with Dad in Amarillo, the rest of us left in Topeka, and with all the children out of school for the summer, the way would have seemed clear to sell the farm and to move everybody to Texas. No seasoned Tay-watcher-and-handicapper, however, would have laid any odds that anything like this would take place. No — with our genius for going at things the devious, tortured, heroic way, we kept title to the farm for years to come, and late in 1925, Dad moved out of his boarding house and into a two-room cottage at 1308 Madison Street.

Here again, although the view was not magnificent, the price was right, being twenty-five hundred dollars, payable in decent installments. The neighborhood was well built up, genteel but undistinguished, for all that a member of the great Givins cattle-clan, with whom we never spoke, lived on the corner. Our white frame dwelling, which could have been called a garage house but for its lack of a garage, was on a graveled street and was set well back on a dusty ungrassed lot, with a great trumpet vine at the door and an outdoor toilet at the rear.

“For years we lived anyhow — under the indifferent heaven,” wrote T. E. Lawrence of his time with the Bedouin, and at 1308 Madison Street, anyhow at least, we “got by” for five years. Gradually, over this time, like a fat, hot woman getting out of a girdle, the rest of us got out of the farm, and by 1927 we had leased it out and were ensconced in Amarillo, living out of suitcases, sleeping on daybeds and roll-aways or renting an occasional spare room next door at the Beesoms’.

During one of those summers, in 1926, I became fired with ambition and decided to land a summer job. Dad scouted one out for me with George Barr, a building contractor and a fellow member of the Central Presbyterian Church. I hired out as common labor, and early in June showed up for work. The job was a frame cottage over on Jackson Street, two or three blocks from where we lived, and there I reported for work one morning at seven-thirty, pale-faced and lily-fingered after my spring semester at Washburn.

“College boy, huh?” snorted the foreman, and I said, “Yeah,” as diffidently as I could and began to pick up scrap lumber around the place and carry it to the back of the lot. Professor Irwin had said that the thing to do on any job was to get there early and start right to work, and from the correspondence-school ads in *The Literary Digest* I knew the perils of wasting job-time in cigarette smoking or

idle gossip.

"We don't start work around here 'til eight o'clock sharp," said the foreman. Everybody else was standing around gabbing, looking up at the sky or scratching his balls, and I blushed and dropped my lumber and went over and joined them.

From then on, for a few weeks I did what chores were available, helping as best I could the carpenters who were still hacking out houses by hand as Grampie Franey had done fifty years before, without a power-tool in sight. Soon, however, some brick masons appeared to put in the foundation or a fireplace, and George Barr let me go without a sigh, to join my fortunes with theirs.

They were a lively lot, picturesque and loose-jointed, their talk full of brag, cock and whisky. "And when he said that, hell, I just went over and taken that two-by-four out of his hands, and him and me went to Fist City." . . . "But after I'd left, she kept writin', and her married and all; says, 'You ever come down to Mineola again, don't forget, there's still lots of black hairs around my pussy'."

Most of the work was out in the new Wolflin Addition, to the Southwest, now a genteel suburb where the Chinese elms arch over the streets to give the impression of some mellowed college town in New England, but then a flat expanse of prairie where the Johnson grass rippled in the hot summer wind.

I hauled bricks around in the old iron-wheeled barrows, hammered scaffolding together, and scurried about tempering the mortar from a battered water-bucket. ("Le's have some more facebrick up on this chimbley. Son of a bitch, it's hot up here.")

I walked to and from work, it being only a mile or so each way, dressed in faded brown coveralls and sporting a mustache and a big Mexican straw hat. At eighteen, and for the first time in my life, I was doing a man's work among men and was happy to be doing it. Wages were high; everybody was making money, and I myself was pulling down five dollars a day. My bosses Nick and Dee both liked me, and one day they came around to me on the job.

"Tay, you're a good worker, and you've got a good eye; how'd you like to go apprentice, let us make a bricklayer out of you?"

Opportunity, for the first but not the last time, was hammering at my door, and for the first but not the last time, I turned away.

"Gosh, thanks," I said, "but I've got to go back to school —" and that was that.

Then pretty soon the summer was over, and one day near the end of August, Mother and all of us children piled happily onto the chair-cars of Number Twenty-Two and began the sixteen-hour trek back to Topeka. Left behind me and soon forgotten was the forlorn figure of Dad standing on the station platform, and left behind also

but not as easily forgotten was a situation which had developed during my last few weeks on the job.

I had been set at the task of "washing-down," cleaning the excess mortar off the finished brick-work. For this, we used diluted sulphuric acid and a stiff scrub-brush nailed onto a long stick. I enjoyed it as a change of duties, although properly speaking it was work for journeymen and not for common labor, and I was told to keep a sharp eye out for any union stewards who might come snooping around. I was working out on Ong or Hayden Street, happily scrubbing away, when the word came to report next day to a new location over on Buchanan Street. I was dismayed to find The Terror on me once more, and for no apparent reason; yes, it was "lonesome-homesick-and-mud" time again, only this time in Amarillo, and not in Maine or Alabama. I reported for work as directed, albeit with a heart brimming with dread, and somehow finished up the month, and with it the summer.

It had not been too bad really, and I thought little of it as we rode all afternoon through the flat hot plains, and on into the red-clay hills of Oklahoma, and a few days later I was enrolled as a sophomore at Washburn.

# # #



About six weeks after enrollment, late in October 1926, I was stricken with acute appendicitis, waking up in the night with severe cramps in the gut. Mother was in Amarillo, but I knew her remedies, and promptly administered a massive dose of Epsom salts and followed it up with a soapsuds enema. Either one of those alone was enough to have ruptured a rhinoceros and should have landed me in the mortuary within a matter of hours, but somehow as the pain worsened I managed to haul ass downtown and into the offices of Dr. Sloo. After a brief consultation he called in his colleague Dr. Mills, and arranged for an operation and a private room at Stomont Hospital.

After the operation, I was kept in bed, after the medical fad of the times, for a week or ten days, a step which was alleged to ward off infection and lesion but which guaranteed that I would have painful adhesions for months to come.

The monotony of my stay was somewhat relieved by a night nurse with winsome proportions and the delightful if unethical habit of coming into my room, throwing her arms around me and smothering me with what I later learned to call French kisses. Here again, opportunity came a-tirling at the pin, but I had neither the wit nor the presumption to answer. Still, they were great kisses, warm and sweet, and I have since wondered if they showed up on the chart: "10 P.M. Prepared for night with French kisses and fondling. Slept well."

The adhesions pretty well disabled me from walking, and since we had casually put ourselves afoot by disposing of The Ark back in April, we were now in the market for a car. This time we got a new one, a "dam' Ford" as Mother always called it, but which George Hughes joyfully named The Gorgeous Green Chariot. Like The Ark, it was a touring car, but with none of its vicious habits, and carried Rick and me on many a date and to many a steak roast, as well as to and from school.

When the spring semester was over, along in June I went back to Amarillo and looked up Nick and Dee once more, but was enormously relieved to find that they had no work for me. I fooled around Amarillo for a few weeks and then returned to Topeka in

July. The month before, a tornado had somehow eluded the talismans of Burnett's mound, to come roaring down on the farm, lifting the top off the barn and depositing it neatly in the mulberry trees in the front yard. Jim De Witt, like all the rest of our tenants, was chronically behind in his rent, but amiably agreed to rebuild the barn to make up for it, and I was elected to help him. For all Jim's fiscal irresponsibility he knew how — any fool knew how — to build a barn, and he and I hammered and sawed the summer away.

Rick had graduated from high school in June, and in the fall, instead of going to college, both of us nonchalantly took jobs which Dad had found for us with John Santa Fe. Rick held down a desk in O. S. and D. (Over, Short and Damaged), and I was mail clerk, first for the Assistant General Manager, and then, later on, for the G. M. himself.

The work was light and likewise the pay to match it. I opened the bales of railroad mail, in long brown envelopes franked from one part of the system to the other, and the U.S. Mail and brought it all to Carl, the Chief File Clerk. He marked it for distribution, pulled the files with my help or that of his assistant, and I trotted around with it and put it in the mahogany-stained wooden letter trays marked IN, scooped up anything from the OUT trays, and was on my way.

General Manager Allison was a tremendous swell, who rattled about the system in his private car, and his offices were well waxed and decorous. Here everything was built to outlast the encroachments of Time if not those of the trucking industry. The carpet was deep and of a forest-green hue, and on one wall stood a clock as tall as a driving wheel, with a pendulum of polished brass. Thither, at the stroke of eleven, when the corrective time signal came in, would assemble most of the male clerks of the office, each with his Elgin or Hamilton pocket-watch in hand. Solemnly comparing time-pieces as though charged with the responsibility of bringing The Chief into Los Angeles on time, each would be jubilant or cast-down as the case might be. "Dad-burn; thirty seconds slow; guess I'll have to take it up to Old Finklea again."

So we wore the time away, perhaps giving Dad one of his best years, with both his sons working by his side after the old patriarchal fashion. Meanwhile I was not neglecting the world of the arts, and dusted off at least one of my fiddles, which had not seen much use since high school. I began "taking" again, with a Miss Straight and offered my talents to the Amarillo Philharmonic Symphony. This was a group of culture-mad amateurs which met at Emil E. Meyers' School of Music, a rambling white frame house, formerly the home of some rancher on Polk Street. Here again, in the orches-

tra I found my happy slob's place amongst the second violins, and here, over in the brass section, I met Linda Sue Rainwater.

She was thin-featured and fine-boned, a girl of generous but decent instincts, with soft blonde hair, pretty legs and a marvelous accepting smile. We soon started keeping company ("Here, don't you need some help with that great big old trombone case?") and for the first time in my life I found myself going steady.

Rick's heart meanwhile had become entangled in the dark tresses of a tall, handsome faithful-type girl named Tommye Jean Fry, and he and I together with the two girls futzed around town in the Ford, "making the drag" interminably, driving up and down Polk from Sixteenth to Third and back again, hour after hour, rolling in at one or two in the morning and getting up again at seven to go to work.

On the whole it was an innocent time, although there was a little discreet necking here and there, and Linda Sue, with that tremendous embouchure, had kisses which made up in authority whatever they lacked in passion. Once late at night I was parked out at the edge of town with her, and for the first but not the last time in my life, pulled up a skirt and caressed a thigh, feeling Linda Sue's innocent white bloomers above her rolled stocking tops, and for the first time also, unbuttoned my fly and pulled Old Dobbin out from the stable for a girl to see. I was as astonished as she, both of us staring down at the lovely monster, and then in a gesture which I relate with as much shame as anything else in this chronicle, I explained fatuously that I had not brought any "protection" with me, and Linda Sue pulled her skirt back down over her knees, murmuring, "Well, we really shouldn't, — after all, your career, and everything."

What my career had to do with any of that I only dimly perceived, but I obediently shoved Old Dobbin back in his stall, for all that he seemed whickering and eager for a gallop over the moors, only, one suspects, to drag him out again when the date was over and I was alone once more.

A few months, later, in September, I kissed Linda Sue a Smile-the-While-You-Kiss-Me-Sad-Adieu kiss at the Santa Fe Depot, said good-by to the gang, and got on the train to go back to school. Among the bunch was Jake Abohosh, a tall, carelessly constructed accountant's apprentice, a lad of about my own age with a pleasant wit and a surprisingly good knack as an amateur cartoonist. He had been running with the pack, but was partial to Linda Sue, and I wrung his hand along with that of the rest, and told him to take good care of my girl for me. He promised to do so, and sure enough, when I returned for Thanksgiving vacation, Linda Sue gently broke the news to me that she and Jake were "getting serious," and shortly afterward they were married.

I do not know that I received this news with any great heartbreak. In any case, that fall there was new excitement in the air. When we had got on the train and pointed 'em north late in August we were headed ultimately, not for Washburn College at Topeka, but for Kansas University at Lawrence.

# # #

Lawrence, a sweet little college town, dozed on the banks of the Kaw about halfway between Topeka and Kansas City. Here the University of Kansas, originally North College, had flourished since being founded by stern-faced, culture-mad Presbyterians back in Civil War times.

As indicated earlier, the town had been a Free-Soil stronghold, where Quantrill and his pro-slavery raiders had roared into town on August 21, 1863, dined at the Eldridge Hotel, smashed the furniture, and left without picking up the check. They had then swept through the village, shooting everybody in sight and setting fire to anything that would burn. Money poured in from the New England Immigrant Aid Society and elsewhere in the East for the relief of the stricken town. By 1866 the war was over and the town rebuilt, but a fund of \$20,000 still reposed in the kitty. This, instead of being returned, was sagely disbursed to erect the first building of the new college. The Board of Regents solemnly inspected the facilities, hired three professors, a lecturer on hygiene and a janitor, and found themselves in business.

The school was beautifully situated on Mt. Oread, a horseshoe-shaped ridge west of town, with the broad waters of the Kaw lying like a lazy colon to the North, and the farms and meadows of the Wakarusa Valley to the South.

In September 1928, it was still small, as state universities go, with a little over four thousand students. In keeping with the presence of Dr. James Naismith, the inventor of basketball on its faculty, the school, like Washburn, had a top basketball team, and the college yell was the famous Rock Chalk, Jay Hawk, Kay U.

Back in July Mother had gone ahead as shock troops and rented an apartment. With three kids in college and one in high school, "we had decided" to move all four of us to Lawrence. Jane might well have stayed home, kept house for Dad, and attended high school in Amarillo, but with the Tay genius for blandly ignoring obvious solutions, she was packed up and brought north with the rest of us.

Our apartment was a shotgun affair at 918½ Massachusetts Street, in the heart of downtown Lawrence, and about a mile from Mt.

Oread. It was gloomy and high-ceilinged, indifferently papered in Boarding-House Brown, and one reached the third bedroom only by walking through the second. All this, coupled with the fact that it was located upstairs, and directly over an all-night taxi stand, doubtless contributed to its modest rental of thirty dollars a month.

Rick at eighteen, was a freshman, and Manon, who had stayed at home with the rest of us during the past year, was enrolled like me, as a junior. Each of us gave his address as RFD 28, Topeka, in order to save the out-of-state registration fee, and one might note in this connection that one of my courses was Elementary Ethics and my final grade in it, C. I was by this time orientated toward law, and Rick toward medicine, in his case perhaps on the theory that since he already had his Uncle Hill's birthday he might as well take on his profession. Manon, although already engaged to one Duke Price of Colorado Springs, valiantly enrolled in education courses to "fit her for something useful."

During the next two semesters I attended classes in rhetoric, psychology, history, and as befitted an English major, in Browning, and the English novel.

During this school year I had a few desultory dates, made no new friends and can remember no outstanding professors beyond Margaret Lynn. She was white-haired, with a glint of merriment in the blue eyes behind her gold-rimmed pince-nez. We studied *Tom Jones*, *Humphrey Clinker* and even bits of *Clarissa Harlowe*. Coming down to modern times, we wound up with *The Egoist* by Meredith and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*; this was about as far as it was safe to go; another step and we would have been into D. H. Lawrence. Manon also took one of her courses, and we both were struck with her scornful "But what *do* you young people read?" upon finding to her sorrow that we were not, to a man, steeped in the *oeuvre* of Trollope and of Thomas Love Peacock.

She was a civilized person, with a little house and car of her own, the one of all of my professors who tried to break the barriers and reach through to me. She had each of us, seriatim, to her house for afternoon tea which she served in Haviland cups before a wood fire, and where she asked us gentle, probing questions.

"Do you think Tom Jones would have made a good pirate?" I mumbled some fatuous response, overwhelmed at sitting down, knee-to-knee, with Authority.

I took readily to the work; the big university and its beautiful setting were highly stimulating, and for the first time in my life I applied myself, being, as one would now say, highly motivated. In the Spring, to my astonishment, I found myself, along with Manon on the Dean's Honor List. Doubtless this was published in *The*

*Daily Kansan*, and in addition, both of us were called to the Dean's office for a visit. I was duly congratulated and then completely dumfounded at being asked my opinion about the university, the staff, and its methods of teaching. My response, like that to Miss Lynn, was mumbling and of no consequence, my dark, old, inbred sense of Order and the Hierarchy and my place in them, being all of a sudden turned upside-down.

At the end of the school year in the summer of 1929, I stayed on for summer school, having dropped some credits on the transfer from Washburn; while the rest of the family went to Amarillo or took off for our newly acquired summer-cabin in Colorado, I spent six weeks in Lawrence, at a rooming house on The Hill.

I was free of home restraints, and here was my first taste of campus life as I had read of it in the hotsy-totsy pages of *College Humor*. A boy named Fred Levis lived in my boarding house, and next door lived a landlord named Brown and four or five girls of a giddy nature, and we romped around the campus, went swimming in the Kaw together, while heedlessly my grades once more fell away toward C's.

I had my uke of course, and Fred taught me the words and chords to "Frankie and Johnny." Up to this time I had never heard the expression "folk song," although during my years at Washburn, Manon reported having been to a concert by some old geezer named Sandburg who played the guitar and sang some old-timey songs. Well, now I added "Frankie and Johnny" to my repertoire and joyfully bored the family with it when I went back to Amarillo.

At the end of the short summer term, Fred and I gleefully composed a garland of verse which we entitled "Bawdy Ballads of the Brown House" and which we distributed to the girls and to the other boys in the pack. This work, now mercifully lost to the literature of the Mid-West, contained a quatrain for each of the girls, done in the manner of Villon, and afterwards, drunk with fame, Fred and I swaggered around town as though each of us were the poet himself at Fat Margot's or at the Fir Apple in the Rue de la Juiverie.

Hans also was much in evidence during this time. The previous summer we had mooned about Topeka together, at one period even courting the same girl. Delilah McMahan was a cool tall lovely creature, and Hans and I would go and sit beneath her window at midnight, to serenade her with "Moonlight Bay" and "When Irish Eyes are Smilin'."

I stood in considerable awe of Hans at this time, as one who had lost his virginity. (As we have seen, I had lost mine too, but that really didn't count). This had happened when I was still working for

the Santa Fe in Amarillo, and when Hans had somehow managed to eke out a year of study at the University of Kansas. According to his letter to me, it had happened at the Unitarian church in Lawrence, where Hans had held down the position of janitor and furnace-man.

"It happened in the church parlor," he had confided, writing in his functional, blocky, architect's hand, "and really, there is not so much to it. It is over too soon — the best moment is when you are slipping her bloomers down over her beautiful butt and getting ready for it. Afterwards, she said, 'Well, Hans, I didn't resist much, did I?' And I said, 'No, just enough to make it interesting'."

During all this time there was, for me, the loss of at least one other virginity; with the books that Hans and Marlene urged upon me, gone was the happy sentimental inspirational plot of former years, of the young farm lad, rough of hand but noble of brow, who went to the Big City and raised himself to affluence through Hard Work and Clean Living — the plot, one might add, of the life of Howard Hermann Tay.

Now, in the novels of Dreiser and Sherwood Anderson, I read for the first time of the sensitive, artistic, tortured soul, usually on remote, Middle-West farmsteads, raised not by poor and honest, but rather by domineering and materialistic, parents. Hans and I both identified readily with such souls, and with them yearned for MacDougal Alley and The Left Bank as the Muslim yearns for Paradise, where the lutes twang for eternity and where the acts of intercourse with the heavenly houris (with breasts as they were melons, and bottoms like unto the full moon rising o'er the rose-gardens of the Shah), the acts of intercourse, I say, last for five hundred years, although one might speculate if during all that time, somebody might want to get up, walk around, go to the john or send out for pizza.

The fact that this plot had been a favorite subject of fiction since the days of Balzac and Dickens at least, was lost on us, and also lost on us was the fact that it was from the ranks of such mis-cast aesthetes that our generation's levy of Lesbians, homos, neurots, drunkards and suicides would be recruited.

Be that as it may, mixed in with all that, like the colors in one of Mother's harlequin cakes, was a strong strain of the irony-and-pity of Anatole France, an author whom we devoured, along with the self-conscious posturings of the heroes of James Branch Cabell. ("Most people call it *Ca-bell*," pontificated Hans, "but it's really *Cabble*.") *Jurgen* we could, and did, quote by the hour, intrigued by the fact that it had been banned in New York; we were seduced by the cadence of the prose, the flavor of learning mixed with sex and satire, and the creation before our very eyes of the legendary land



and people of Storisende. Cabell was our Tolkein, Storisende and Poictesme, our Land of Mordor, and Jurgen was our Frodo; and we pored over the books as previously I had over the works of Horatio Alger and of Harold Bell Wright.

During these years, Hans fell in love with a lissom blond intellectual Gamma Phi Beta who upon graduation left him and went to New York.

"She's just got married on me," Hans groaned one night of crisp moonlight, wandering through Chesney Park, with the shadows of the children's swings black upon the ground. " — married some other social worker. They live down in the Village, and pal around with Sinclair Lewis and that gang. Fact, she calls him, 'Red';" all this in the tones of a troubadour whose true-love has just married into the Plantagenets and who knows Richard the Lion-Hearted as Ricky.

"You're kidding," I said. " 'Red,' huh? Hot damn!"

During those years Hans aspired to be an architect, but in Topeka got no farther than the drafting rooms of the Santa Fe Railway, and for a year or so, held down the position of Director of Recreational Therapy at Menninger's. Here, his size, and speed of foot were of great importance; he could cow the mental patients into weaving baskets or playing volleyball, and could handle or chase down anybody who got over the fence. He never made it to the Bohemian haunts of Paris or Manhattan, but finally managed to study for a year or so with Saarinen and after that, to plan supermarkets for Safeway.

So the 1929 summer session passed, and early in August I returned to Amarillo and answering a classified ad in the *Globe*, enlisted, for reasons which I did not understand, in the Texas National Guard.

I was in, or so I thought, not for a full hitch but merely to pad out a contingent to go to summer camp down at Palacios. Thither, to the sweltering Gulf Coast, our outfit went late in the month, after a desultory drill or two in the armory.

I was in the field artillery, which in 1929 was still a matter of horse-drawn 75's, both the field pieces and some of the horse-flesh, being left over from The Great War. Clad in peaked wide-brimmed felt hats, our legs sweating in hand-wrapped wool leggings, we were housed in field-tents and paid a dollar a day. We curried the obstreperous hacks at the peril of our limbs and then bestrode them to the firing line where the fuses were set by hand, and where we shot at targets out over the blue-gray waters of Matagorda Bay. The adventure was pleasant to me, although I was known as The Sultan from my habit of sleeping beneath a mosquito bar, marvelously y-clad in

yellow silk pajamas which had been a birthday present from Mother.

After two weeks of this I was ready to come home, and after two weeks also, the Terror came upon me, the gnawing anxiety from whence I knew not, and I came home in a panic to Amarillo. In World War II, my outfit was one of the first to be called up, and saw service, along with death and starvation at Bataan and Corregidor. But by then I had long since been dropped from the rolls, along perhaps, with all the horses and the most of those old 75's.

Once again, at home and on easy ground, I was free to take up my brief summer's romance with Tangee Todhunter, but of her, and of further exploits with the military, more later.

Now, it was September, and time to go back to college, to enroll once more in K.U., but this time, fatefully enough, in the law school and in the Fall of 1929 at that.

# # #

The School of Law at K. U. had been founded around 1870, less than twenty years after the original North College itself, and its most prestigious dean had been "Uncle Jimmy" Green. Uncle Jimmy's heroic-sized bronze statue, by Daniel Chester French no less, towered in front of Green Hall, the two-story building which housed the law school. The classical portico, with its brownstone fluted pillars and white-globular light fixtures combined the best features of a Grecian temple and a municipal police court.

The red granite base of the statue made a convenient if somewhat arse-chilling bench for the embryo barristers, who on fine days would slouch there, shooting the bull and whistling "The Dead March" in cadence with the steps of every co-ed who ventured to pass by.

During my stay at the summer school I had worked in the library for thirty cents an hour and was glad to get it, shelving books and filing index cards, and now in the Fall I applied for my old job and was promptly granted it, and, being as yet ignorant of the maxim that the law is a jealous mistress, also enrolled blithely in orchestra.

By the first week or so in September, the whole fam-damilly, in Manon's arch phrase, was ensconced back on Massachusetts Street, and with a light heart I signed up for first-year law and began wagging the heavy case-books up and down Mt. Oread. I had the uneasy feeling that Green Hall wasn't the place to take the violin, and so on orchestra days I would sneak it past the law school, on the other side of the street, to leave it in the practice-room.

The law school, along with the medical school, is a late-bloomer in our culture. Up to the 1870's or so, if you wanted to be a doctor you "walked the hospitals" as did John Keats, or if you wanted to be a lawyer, you became a clerk and "read law," hanging around an attorney's office and the courts, reading Blackstone and picking things up as best you could.

Then came the schools of law, which at first taught largely by text-book and by rote, but by 1929 most of these had gone over to the casebook method. Oh, there were texts all right and we studied them, *Burdick on Real Property*, *Bohlen on Torts*, and of course Wigmore, who could tell you more about Evidence than you cared to

know. The casebook method was Socratic; we "got-up our cases" by reading the actual reports, and the student called upon to recite gave first the facts, then the principles of law which were involved and then, finally, the decision of the learned Court. The professor then called for a general discussion, pointing out on occasion the Massachusetts Rule, the New York Rule, or the general or common-law rule. We read of, but read little in, the classical authorities of olden time, Coke, Brackton, Littleton, and that suave prose stylist and unsuccessful practitioner, Sir William Blackstone. Yes, we were all too busy getting through trade-school for much of that; in those days you could plunge into law school after the second year of college and emerge in three years, dripping, on the other side, with your L.L.B. in hand, ready for the bar exam and the hanging-up of your shingle.

Our Contracts casebook was a formidable tome of three or four pounds weight, and its first case, one which is burned into my memory, was that of *Nebraska Seed Company vs. Harsh*. It was a case of offer and acceptance, and in the course of time I, the quick-scanner, the facile rote-learner, read it over and over, like an early Egyptologist pouring over hieroglyphics, seeking to pry out its meaning.

My professor in this course was Dean Mavis, head of the law school, a deliberate, slow-moving man with metal-rimmed spectacles and lacquered black hair which he parted in the middle and which, curling down over both sides of his head gave him the appearance of a learned kindly short-sighted musk-ox. He was a good man, conscientious and thorough, who told us that we ought to spend at least three hours preparing for every hour in class. This proposition I found preposterous, since it left little time for perusing *Vanity Fair* and *Arts and Decoration*, playing the violin, or roaming the autumn fields with von Tirpitz, chanting the strophes of Ernest Dowson or Hamlin Garland. Like all the Sad Young Men of the period, we had "Cynara" by heart, she to whom we had been faithful in our fashion: "Cynara" then, and the muscular *machismo* of "Do you fear the force of the wind,/The slash of the rain?/ Go face them and fight them/ Be savage again."

At first, all went well; I worked in the library in the afternoons and went to orchestra rehearsal once or twice a week, had a few casual dates, and studied my cases at night or when I could steal a few minutes of company-time while on the job at the library. I studied, and studied, and studied the cases, but their content, what they were getting at, what they demanded, continued to elude me. I didn't know the answers — I didn't even know what the hell the questions were. I stumbled through recitations in class, where the discussions of the other students and the disquisitions of the learned

professors all sounded like gibberish, like something picked up on an unscrambled code-telephone; I was like a waitress over-hearing the shop-talk of a table-full of astro-physicists. All this was an experience new to me and foreign to my nature; like arithmetic, it was not subject to my charm; it was not learning merely, but rather, learning to think; my whole being rose up against it: I would have none if it then, and am still not too fond of it today.

Within a few weeks I had given up my social life, together with orchestra, novel reading and the job in the library, and had begun to spend blinding hours at home, hunched up in the old brown leather rocking-chair by the dim light filtering through the lace curtains or coming from the single light-globe overhead, reading, reading, reading, law, law, law.

Afternoons I spent in the library on the second floor of the law school, which commanded a magnificent view of the Kaw Valley, where the autumn had never seemed so beautiful. The windows were high and broad, and the big oak library tables stood firm and uncompromising on the brown cork floors. The tables were piled high with law books, many of them still in Dickensian calf bindings, and here I toiled the afternoons away, "beating the books" concerned with Personal Property, Torts, Criminal Law, Contracts and Procedure. In my troubled sleep, an endless Torah-scroll of print unrolled before my eyes, and doubtless my breath, temper and digestion grew worse by the day.

Needless to say, nothing availed; I was too old to stand at the blackboard and cry, and was as yet unacquainted with the learned maxim attributed to W. C. Fields, "If at first you don't succeed, quit — there's no use being a damned fool."

By mid-semester I, who in the College of Liberal Arts had been on the Dean's Honor Roll and had been consulted on weighty matters, was on probation. I was neither rebuked nor warned about this sad state of affairs, and never dreamed of seeking advice or counseling. I had wandered into a strange and bewildering world, one which was masculine and dedicated, and notably lacking in poets, dream-spinners and vo-do-do-de-oh playboys.

— — —

The Art Institute in Chicago, standing there on the wind-swept skyscraper wastes of Michigan Boulevard, must be one of the country's great museums. I had been there a few times before with the family, and had paid it no especial mind; but now on January 30th, 1930, it was a Place To Go To; and on that day and in that city I needed such a place.

A few days before, in spite of all hell, I had squeaked through my first semester in law school, with two D's, a C, and most surprisingly one B in Criminal Law and another in Torts.

Now, between semesters, Manon was bound for New York to visit her fiancé at Columbia, and I had volunteered to go with her, for the ride and to take a look at Greenwich Village. Of course transportation was no problem; by then every one of us had a fistful of annual passes, on various railroads from Guatemala to the Arctic Circle (there was even one for the nine-mile cog road which ran from Manitou up to the summit of Pike's Peak). The journey from Lawrence to New York was a matter of only two nights and a day, and all of us had long since become inured to that irritation of the tail-bone which Rick in his medical school days was to label chair-car coccyx.

Manon and I, then, she bright-eyed with anticipation, myself still groggy from the ordeal of the finals, piled onto the crowded coach and woke up the next morning stiff and cramped in Chicago. Here the Santa Fe line ended, and we were due to make the familiar trek over to the Illinois Central Station to catch the train for New York.

With our suitcases in hand, we both stepped off into the blue smoky early-morning cold of the train sheds, and after taking a few steps up the platform I discovered that I was no longer in control of my life; some son-of-a-bitch somewhere had called in all my emotional paper; it was candy-store time again, and "This time you have to pay."

The feeling was that of galactic loneliness, or of standing outside a heavy glass pane and watching yourself move around behind it, a feeling of panic and terror and a desire for flight, only your legs will not carry you, you are being chased by a tiger through a nightmare swamp of molasses and you cannot stir.

I stopped Manon there on the platform and told her I could not go on to New York, that I was going back to Lawrence, and she cried bitterly and then trudged on up the platform ahead of me to catch her bus, and with several hours to kill, I drifted uptown to the Loop and over to the Art Institute.

At the museum I wandered around, seeing with new eyes the French Impressionists about whom I had been reading in the decorators' magazines at Watkins Library, intrigued by the blue and silver of the Manets, and the inspired stippling of Seurat's "Grand Jatte." I meandered amongst these in a daze, trying to find some solace in art, mooning through the galleries, despondent as an unsecured creditor at a bankruptcy hearing, and at noon went down to the cafeteria for a cup of tea and a bowl of soup. I can still recall the other-worldly taste of that soup, with which I had no real con-

nection; it was somebody else who was tasting it, and even the tea sat on my stomach like a bowlful of cement. I still knew who I was and where I was, but I had resigned from the club; I had checked it to them.

My train back to Lawrence did not leave for another hour or so, and I wandered back upstairs, perhaps to look at the Impressionists some more, perhaps at Rembrandt's "Young Girl at an Open Half-Door," a picture which I covet above all others in this world. At any rate, there, amongst the glowing canvases I was accosted by an elegant intense young man. He wore a dark business suit and seemed pleasant enough, as he made some inane comment about the paintings, and then, falling into conversation, I told him I had intended to go to New York but had changed my mind and was headed back to Kansas. At this he suggested a most amicable arrangement; he was going to New York that very afternoon; why did I not change my mind and go back with him — he had a lower berth which he would share without extra cost to me, and would I — oh, *would* I —.

I knew then what he was, and what he was about — von Tirpitz and I had talked and read much about such folk without ever meeting one — and perhaps it will disappoint the reader to hear that I was not lured nor especially disturbed by his offer. I passed it off with a shrug, and after a little more desultory chat I took down his address, promised to look him up if ever I came to New York, and later on, slouched over to the Santa Fe Station and caught a train for Lawrence.

All through this day, a phrase kept running through my mind, "I will go back to Mother and pour out the whole sordid story"; but the story I intended to pour out was merely that of the haymow incident, which had happened years before and which had never been mentioned by anybody since.

I reached Kansas City the next morning, and the train went on through Lawrence without stopping — in my plight I had taken the wrong train by mistake —, and I engaged the conductor in conversation, told him I wanted off, and when he refused to stop the train I tore up my pass and threw it in his face. He then demanded train fare, and I mockingly turned my pockets inside out and showed him that I had nothing beyond a few coins. This poverty was not an uncommon occurrence for me, who was accustomed to start out across the country like a hippie of our own times, with a few bucks and the addresses of friends or relatives in my pocket.

Once back in Lawrence, I found that Mother had gone to Amarillo, and I never poured out any sordid story, then or later, but rather promptly checked into the student hospital with gastro-intestinal symptoms. I stayed there for a few days and then enrolled for

the second semester in law school.

After a few days however, I gave it all up and took the train for Amarillo, bursting in on Mother and Dad with the surprising news that I had quit and was coming back to Amarillo to live. They promptly sent me to old Doctor Boscoe who discovered that I had acute tonsillitis and, scurrying back to Lawrence and the student hospital for free medical treatment, I had my tonsils out, and while I was about it, sauntered casually back into the Law School and began to attend classes again at Green Hall.

So the winter dragged on; it seemed to last forever; and I longed for the warmth and cheer of Spring. Finally June arrived, and late in May I saw that I had done it again somehow, and had slipped through with a couple of D's, three C's and a B.

Now, with my three years in the college, and with the one year in law school, I was eligible for the "combined degree" of Bachelor of Arts. Manon had earned her B.A. also, in education, and we went through commencement exercises together and received our sheepskins.

I had finished my course, and fool that I was, had kept the faith. In the process I had drifted not only into the Art Institute at Chicago, but also into another museum, that of the neuroses, into those airless halls where are displayed, always in order and neatly ticketed, the painfully constructed artifacts of the spirit, each one home-tailored, functional and lovely, and composed entirely of shit.

# # #



Autumn in Amarillo is a beautiful thing. Here on the High Plains, about three quarters of a mile above sea-level, the nights are chilly rather than cold, and during the day it is warm in the sun and cool in whatever shade you can find. By now, the hot winds and dust-storms are over, the air is clean and dry like a good sherry, and at night the stars burn overhead in the cloudless sky.

Except for some cottonwoods along the creek banks, there are no flaming autumn colors, and no cornfields ripening in the September sun; just flat acres of cotton, wheat and row-crops stretching to the horizon, all immensity and peace, and the sky pale-blue and empty except for the eternal black smudge in the North from the carbon-black plants at Borger.

I was enjoying all this, spending the Fall and Winter of 1930 at home rather than returning to school in September. After graduation in June, my tensions had eased considerably, and during the summer I had made some shambling efforts at getting a job. "Have you ever sold windmills?" was a poser which popped out at me from an application form at the Amarillo Hardware Company, and I had to confess that I never had. With no "education" credits whatsoever, I brashly applied for a school to teach, first in Texas, and then in New Mexico, only to find that in one state I could get a school but no certificate, and in the other, a certificate but no school.

None of this seemed to matter a great deal, neither to me nor to the family; and perhaps Bentz Plageman was right after all, when he said that we never want anybody that we love, to amount to very much. In any event, I had my degree, and was eligible to play the part of the squire's eldest son, a pass-man just down from the University, idling away a year or so chasing foxes and milk-maids in the shires while waiting for something likely to open up in the Church or in the Army.

In October 1930, of course, the Great Depression was a year old, but rumors of this reached our family as something dimly heard and far away. Throughout the Thirties, in fact, as Dad held his job and his salary increased, the Great Crash continued to be the best thing that we had ever known, and I blush to note our indifference to the distress around us. In December 1929, we had acquired the property

next to us, a large, two-story frame house on the corner, and had set out typically, to fix it up, to impose, once more, oak flooring over pine and to re-paper nearer to the heart's desire.

In addition to the new house, around Halloween in 1930 we acquired a new car, a splendid equipage of Funeral Director's Black with dove-gray upholstery, a six-cylindere Pontiac sedan, splendidly bedight with sparkling wire wheels, twin spares mounted in fender-wells, and a separate box-trunk stuck on at the rear as a sort of automotive after-thought.

Mother at this time was forty-nine, and in spite of massive psychosomatic complaints, still full of the old Franey bounce and zingo, and I was elected to teach her to drive. Our second lesson ended with her freezing at the controls as we crossed the Fort Worth and Denver tracks on lower Polk Street, and while we both sat paralyzed, seeing our front bumper torn off by a speeding passenger train. After this she resigned herself, not without a certain satisfaction, to being squired about town by her college-graduate chauffeur.

I soon had other passengers, it is true, being surprised to find how many of the unmarried females of Potter County were in desperate plight for transportation. One of these girls, of about my age, was Pam Hostetter, of chunky build, yellow hair and indifferent complexion, but endowed with a pneumatic bosom, happy brown eyes and a husky laugh. She and I puttered around town for a few weeks, and then one evening of sparkling moonlight, "There's somebody you ought to meet," said Pam to me, and at her direction we drove southeast fifteen miles or so, to the lip of Palo Duro Canyon.

Both of us had been in this vicinity before; it was not too far from the Harding Ranch, a favorite picnic spot on the banks of Palo Duro Creek. In times past, this had been wild country, the haunt of the Comanches and their Mexican trading friends the Comancheros; the ciboleros had been there, too, buffalo hunters from Chihuahua with their leather pants, fusils and flat-topped sombreros, and a few miles down-stream from where we were, in early-settler days, Colonel Goodnight had wintered his longhorns.

To the West we could see the lights of the little college town of Canyon, where once upon a time Georgia O'Keeffe had taught art, and now we drove up to a lonely ranch house where yellow lights gleamed through lace curtains at the windows. An iron windmill tower and a huge stock-barn towered at the rear of a one-story white frame house with lilacs all around the veranda. We knocked, and soon enough were being greeted at the door, and I had my first glimpse of my first true-love.

Mavis MacLean was a graceful girl, with arching nose and gray-

green eyes. She had wide, flat hips and was fine-breasted: she was almost as tall as my own height of five feet eight and had good shoulders and long slender legs. She led us through a dark-panelled hallway and into the kitchen, a large warm fragrant place where we sat at a table and sipped green tea.

I soon forgot about cuddly little Pam and gave all my attention to Mavis. She was gracious and animated and met my definition of a brilliant conversationalist, as someone who would listen while I talked and who had not yet heard all my stories. Her voice had a pleasant, metallic bite to it and her Panhandle accent, which said "pinny" for "penny," and *ce*-ment and *ho*-tel, sounded as strange to me as my broad Kansas twang probably sounded to her.

Her family, we soon learned, had been here for decades, this area in the Seventies and Eighties having been a favorite roosting-place for surplus Scotch cattle-money and for surplus younger sons as well.

Her father, Ian MacLean, whom me met later in the evening, was short and wiry, with a resemblance to George Hughes, but without a beard. His hair had been sandy but was now whitening; he was a sober and industrious man, although, as I was to learn later, not one who would strike you across the face with anything heavy if you offered him a drink. His wife, Mavis' mother, was tall and mild-mannered, and with the same fine blue eyes; she had raised a couple of sons who had married and moved away, and now Mavis was the only child left at home.

There was a hint of gentle blood, and somewhere in the past a gifted peripatetic aunt who had penned travel books and had a nice way with water colors.

With a request that was soon to become familiar, Mavis asked me for a ride back to Amarillo. I was enchanted from the first, and there is evidence that Pam was furious ("She can talk about you for hours and not say anything nice," Mavis commented in one of her letters several months later). Mavis was tender and loving, and both of us were hungry for affection, living in the back-waters of life, hanging around home, waiting for something to happen.

Pretty soon we were seeing each other every day and half of every night, and also, pretty soon I found myself on extended visits to other parts of the continent. It is hard to tell at this remove whether my change of scene was arranged by Mother in her panic, or perhaps by me subconsciously in mine. As we shall see later on, it could have been either or both. In any event, by the end of January, 1931, I had packed my bags and violin and found myself a more or less welcome house-guest at 55 Sunset Boulevard, in Ottawa, Ontario.

This little jewel-box of a house, a cream-colored stucco with a blue door, was Uncle Hill's home, and here in a glittering milieu I kept up my aimless existence. I had been here before, having spent a week or so in 1928, just before going to K.U. in September; all of our family had been here too, at one time or another, Mother having the imperious habit of writing to Hill that we were coming, and in effect, that the royal flag had by God better be flying from the battlements when we arrived.

Hill Franey, with his M.D. from McGill, was in charge of the Department of Radiology at the Ottawa Civic Hospital. He was a stout, paunchy, tart-tongued little man whom we all adored, pleasantly anti-Semitic and a devotee of proper-Edwardian living. "They've got a maid, and serve cocktails before dinner," we had long since confided to whatever gaping peasants we could persuade to listen.

His wife Nan, in her early thirties was a handsome high-spirited woman, a gifted painter who was fired with ambition to make a name for herself in Canadian art circles.

Now, invited or not, I spent two or three weeks, going to art shows, meeting such folk as George and Kay Pepper along with Pegi Nichol, all of them, like Nan Lawson Franey, artists, who talked and lived art. I went skiing, fetchingly attired in astrakhan cap and a pair of Hill's World War I army pants, and, across the river at Hull, in the company of Morris Longstreth bravely downed my first beer. I had met Morris before, on my previous visit, and had been quick to write Hans back in Topeka that at last I Knew A Real Author. He was a bachelor of about Nan's age, an intense, witty man, a boulevardier of sorts and much sought after as an extra man for parties. He had penned some inconsequential romantic novels and a volume or two of verse, and was a newspaperman who later became a staff writer of distinction for *The Christian Science Monitor*.

Here then, like one of Tolstoy's heroes idling away the winter season in St. Petersburg, I skied and skated, and stylishly tuxedoed, squired Nan and Pegi around town, to various soirées at the Little Theater or the Chateau Laurier.

Finally, having worn my welcome to shreds, I had the grace to go, not home, but rather to Florida, and to Bradenton, the old folks' refuge, God's Waitingroom, at that.

Grampie Franey and "Aunt Mae," as we called our step-grandmother, were spending the winter there, and once arrived, I loafed around the little port on the Florida West Coast for another month or so before returning to Amarillo. At Bradenton I roamed the water front, went fishing with cane pole and bobber off the break-

waters and, to Mae's horror, read George Bernard Shaw.

"I do believe," she cried, snatching some volume of his up from the table, "that this man doesn't believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ!" Now, for all that she was a pert and kindly person of whom I had always been fond, I made some smart-ass reply to her comment on Shaw. For the past two or three years, I had been casting off the somber garb of the Calvinists in exchange for the sterile, glittering raiment of Unitarianism, and like all converts, brimmed with obnoxious ardor for the new faith. This shift in religious doctrine was largely the work of von Tirpitz, and perhaps unconsciously I hoped that at the new church I too might achieve sexual happiness on the couch-cushions of the minister's study.

On the fishing piers also, for the second time within a year I was approached by a homosexual, a suave, blond man in his thirties who engaged me in conversation and then, luring me to his hotel room, locked the door and placed his hand upon my privates.

"No," I said, as though refusing to purchase a pair of shoes that didn't happen to strike my fancy, "I don't believe I will," and unlocking the door, I strolled out and away, and went back to my fishing.

In the last week of March, I came home, and Mavis and I took up where we had left off. During my absence, I had written to her two or three times a week, letters which have survived the years, letters whose themes were loneliness, passion, hedonism and snobbery, and whose style included pale imitations of writers all the way from Walter Winchell to Henry James.

It is a sorrow to note such ghastly phraseology as booful gel; col-litch boy; whyinell; and ennahow; but on the other hand I was beginning to look at things, and at people especially, with a writer's eye.

At a railroad station I had noticed in the waiting room a "short, fat man with a confident hat, a pink saintly gent in glasses and goatee, and a nice Pollyanna on her first visit to the Great and Wicked City." Of the pansy at Bradenton, I noted, "He writes advertising, has no gall bladder, and wears tweeds and horn-rimmed glasses." From Florida I penned a social commentary: "Did I tell you how dismal it was, coming through Georgia like Sherman — swamps and terrible shacks — the Cracker Belt, they said it was. Me, I'd rather prefer the Bible Belt (H. L. Mencken) or up around the Garter Belt (Gossard)." There is an occasional attempt at literary criticism: "Reading a horrible book, *Sanctuary*, about the dissolute South, in Mississippi"; and later on, "Tried to read *Ex-Wife*, and it was such rot I couldn't. God deliver us from the type of book we'd like to write ourselves. Have you read *Cyrano de Bergerac*, 'I know all

small, forgotten things that once meant you?" Mixed in with all that too, were words bursting straight from the heart: "There are times, yes there ARE times, dear Mavis, when I miss you so it hurts me as an ache, and I'd give anything I've got to be with you and feel your arms around me, and your mouth kissing me."

Mavis wrote often to me, in a backward-slanting, delicate hand, and in much the same vein:

"The sea, beloved by a thousand ships  
Is maiden ever, and fresh and free.  
Ah, for the kiss of her cool green lips,  
Carry me out to sea!"

Late in March then, I packed up my bags, along with the still unplayed violin, and began the trek back to Amarillo. Once arrived, I took up my role once more, escorting Mother to and from church socials, and wagging Mavis to and from the ranch. Our love affair continued its rocky, brawling course, like a mountain stream that yearns to flow between sweet grassy banks. Both of us were jealous and possessive, and we both cared for each other as deeply as our passive-dependent natures would allow. I spent many hours kissing and caressing her, some of them in bed with her at the ranch, fondling her breasts, but not daring to do anything else, seeing as we lay there through the clear Panhandle air, the big red neon sign atop the new Santa Fe Building. "The Eye of God," I said, "watching us," and fell asleep, still holding her in my arms.

During this time, I was once more set upon by the Third, or is it the Fourth, Sex. One night at the ranch, a visitor asked me to go down into the canyon with him on some pretext, and once there, assaulted me in his little cabin, describing, as he put his hand on my limp and unresponsive prick, the enormous satisfaction he had recently enjoyed with a football star from the University of New Mexico.

"He was big and hard and clean," breathed the feistly little bald-headed queer, working himself up to a high pitch, his voice and hands trembling, "and God, what orgasms, he just never could get enough."

All this left me unmoved, and I pushed him away and we went back to the ranch, where the foreman, a ribald old character named Abercrombie, eyed me with a lewd and merry look as Mavis and I got in the car and drove to Amarillo.

Well, it was a year of decision, in sex, in love and in profession, and in at least one field I seemed to have made the right choices. In sex, I had never considered for a second making the switch, and in love I did as well as my ardent but rigid personality would permit.

As to my chosen life's work — three years before, during my

hitch as mail clerk at the Santa Fe, I had taken my first tangy sip of literary fame and had found it good. O. O. McIntyre, the New York gossip columnist, was big in those days, and borrowing his Thoughts-While-Strolling technique, I wrote two or three sketches of Amarillo life and sent them in to Gene Howe at the *News*. When they were printed, in Gene's "Old Tack" column, I was wild with delight, and now, in 1931 and during my year of Sturm and Drang, I had fumbled around with some poems and the first chapter of a novel, and toyed with the idea of going back to college to study journalism.

One afternoon in August, I stood on our back porch, with Mother bustling about in the kitchen nearby, and "Well, where do you want to go, what do you want to do?" she said, and will-you-won't-you-, do-you-don't-you, my future hung in the balance. Like Amory in *This Side of Paradise*, who was charming but had a tendency to waver at crucial moments, "Oh, God, I don't know, how can I tell?" I cried out — and a month later was sitting at a desk in Green Hall, signing up for my second year in law school.

# # #

In writing of the twenty-four months which followed, from the Fall of 1931 to that of 1933, I am tempted once more to flash my message on the screen: "Meanwhile, Two Years Pass."

In this period, I ground my way through law school with varying degrees of mediocrity, distinction and disgrace; got engaged and got jilted; bought and read some good books; enjoyed the last of the great, good times with Rick; lost my adult virginity; and became a thief.

At the law school, most of the old fears, if not all the old doubts, were gone, and I learned to go through my book at the very beginning of a course and to tip-in a typed summary of every case at its proper place in the text, so that, in the phraseology of the old prison-mines, when the Captain called on me, I always had my coal. This worked well enough for the first year, and I pulled down a series of C's, but then, in the Fall of 1932, the beginning of my senior year, I drifted unwittingly into grief.

I used the new leisure to re-join the orchestra, to pledge and participate in a legal fraternity, Phi Alpha Delta, to catch up on my reading, and to build up my library, acquiring in the process such diverse items as Stephens' *Crock of Gold*, Anatole France's *The Red Lily*, Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, and *The Art of Aubrey Beardsley*. But, above all, there was Swinburne:

"She waits for each and other,  
She waits for all men born,  
Forgets the earth her mother,  
The land of fruits and corn;  
And spring and seed and swallow  
Take wing for her and follow  
Where summer song rings hollow  
And flowers are put to scorn."

I read on and on, curled up in the red-leather womb of a club-chair in the Browsing Room of Watkins Library, while the rain beat on the mullioned windows outside. I was drunk on the word-music of the red-maned Prince of Alliteration, and forgot friends and family, foes and lovers, and along with them, Professor Takinson and his course in Code Pleading.



Senior Laws were Men of Distinction; they carried canes and were supposed to be above failure; yet, at the semester's end, when the grades came out, I found a big fat F staring at me. I was struck dumb, but had enough sense, if that is what it was, to rally, and the next semester poured on the coal, forsook all my dilettante pursuits, and by the end of May, with four B's and three C's came within a hair's breadth of the Honor Roll.

During most of this time Rick and I roomed together, at one boarding house or another, there being no further need for the old walk-up flat on Massachusetts Street. Both girls had fluttered their way out of the family nest within a month of each other, Jane in August, and Manon in September, of 1931.

After her graduation from high school, Jane had been accepted as a student nurse in the Deaconess School of Nursing at Boston, the same place from which Nora Franey had been so ignominiously booted twenty-seven years before. One notes here the tendency of our family to Go Back and Show Those Bastards, no matter by what curious or round-about means. The Deaconess Hospital had flourished over the years, had moved to swankier quarters, and now every floor had its own fever thermometer, but as Jane wrote of it later, "It was still a nunnery, where we were supposed to be little Florence Nightingales; where we worked twelve hours a day, with no time off; where we had to be in the dorms at ten, with the lights out at ten-thirty."

Manon had married Duke Price, her One-and-Only as she would have expressed it, and with him, a physicist with a Ph.D. from Columbia, had left for Washington, D. C. There, he worked in spectrum analysis for the Department of Agriculture, and there they became apartment cave-dwellers and soon began the rearing of their family.

Rick and I roomed together then, he in medical school and I in law school, the both of us sleeping innocently in the same double bed after the fashion of the times, and going to shows together, walking around the campus, shooting the bull, and enduring as best we could each other's recurrent spells of hyper-tension, which we called The Siwegian Carrithers or the Screaming Botts.

Rick was a little taller than I, a thin, freckle-faced man with black curly hair and a congenial wit. I always considered him the handsome one and was astounded some forty years later, to receive from Mavis McLean a snapshot of me without my silver-rimmed specs and slouchy air, a picture of a man in dashing salt-and-pepper tweeds and with the romantic, black-browed features of the late Tyrone Power. Well, to return to Rick; he was non-literary, but we worked up gags together, alternating as straight-man, and attending

Marx Brothers movies for fresh material. "Gus" and "Joe" we called each other, for some reason, and wore each other's neckties and swiped each other's pipe tobacco, having picked up the smoking habit from The Baron.

For years now, a bathroom Romeo, an early day Portnoy, I had kept on with my narcissistic, woman-hating, solitary sexual practice, and during this time also, at the age of twenty-three, after many a half-hearted attempt at seduction, I lost my adult virginity.

Caprice Brannigan was a librarian in Topeka, a slender, brown-haired girl of laughing ways and easy disposition. The Baron had, as he would have expressed it with an ironic leer and in the style of Anatole France, enjoyed her favors, and one night he got me a blind date with her. Afterwards, she took me to her elfin grot, a livingroom in an old two-story frame near Huntoon and Fillmore. I had the distinct impression of a female relative doing an ironing in the next room, but regardless, Caprice and I sat on the couch, and hugged and kissed for a little while. Then, the phrase fore-play being either unknown to me or at the most, associated somehow with the game of golf, I pulled up her skirts and drew down her peach-colored step-ins, and throwing off my own clothes, mounted her with all the delicatessen of a bull-moose in rut. After a few thrusts I came, and then lay back, saying, "Is that all there is to it, is that what it's all about?"

"All about what?" Caprice was pulling her skirt down, straightening her seams and slipping into her crepe-de-chine underwear. "Why darling, you were wonderful," she murmured, and soon enough led me to the door and kissed me good night. I never went back to see her, at least not for thirteen years, and we shall deal with that in due time.

That same winter of 1931, I dated a relict of old Christian Endeavor days, a black-haired earth-mother type named Roxie Zeryp. Again, the Baron and I double-dated at Topeka, driving out in the country to the home of some young married Bohemians, writers who had their souls in pawn to the Capper publications.

Inflamed by draughts of cloudy home-brew, the Baron escorted his true-love to the pasture, where, In The Act, he narrowly escaped being trod upon by a large white stallion, the Pale Horse stepping delicately over the Pale Easy-Rider.

I also led my date outside, thoughtfully plucking a hooked rug from the back porch clothesline as I did so. It was a night of moon and glamor, of chiffon wisps of ground fog, and no horse disturbed us as, lying together on the rug, I kissed Roxie on her full, Cupid's-bow lips, and then lifted her pleated skirt above her gartered stockings, the white thighs gleaming like converging marble columns in

the moonlight. The black lace strap of her teddies showed high above, and the strap I tore through in my passion; as she flexed her knees, I knelt down as the Baron had instructed me ("You *do* know what sixty-nine means, don't you — the French call it *soixante-neuf*"); knelt down then, and kissed her moist, fairy, pouting lips below, until she tossed and moaned in ecstasy. After that, I got on top of her and parted her nether-lips again, but this time with a firm, stiff prick, driving up into the warm, yielding vagina like a pile driver, both my hands full of soft, squirming bottom, and both of us tongue-kissing and gasping as we came together.

When it was over, she told me that she had never been so happy in Kansas City, and I had the fantasy that her expression had been made into the title of a novel, perhaps by Tiffany Thayer or Max Bodenheimer, *Never So Happy in Kansas City*; I could envision it on the dust-jacket in the display window of the Book Nook at Lawrence.

It had been a lovely and memorable happening, and during the next year or so I had a few dates with Roxie, both at K.U. and in Topeka, but we never had sex again, never attempted it, and I never again wandered into moonlit pastures with a rug on one arm and a girl on the other.

About this time also, I sampled the Baron's sister, the graceful willowy brown-eyed Marlene. At the apartment where she lived with her mother, and the Baron slept in the garage, one evening at a party, I paid attention to her and followed her out into the kitchen for a little genteel necking. This was practically under the guns of Burl Landowski, Marlene's fiancé, a wispy, charming, intellectual chap with thick glasses who sat talking with Mrs. von Tirpitz in the next room.

"Good luck," he murmured hopelessly in my direction as he left the party later in the evening; and, out in the garage, when the Baron's breathing became regular, I tip-toed out the door, down the driveway and into Marlene's bedroom with the uneasy feeling that Burl was on stake-out in a parked car down the street.

I ripped off my shirt and pants, and crept into bed with Marlene, where she tried without much success to instruct me in a few fundamentals, and then, "We'll have to get down on the floor," she whispered, "Mother's a light sleeper," and this we did, spreading a blanket on the faded Oriental rug. After she had come to a climax, "Now you go ahead and have a good time," she murmured, and we strained together for a few minutes and then I came, and after cleaning up in the bathroom, dressed and tiptoed back down the driveway, to find the Baron still deep in slumber.

Those three hit-and-run sex collisions were all that I had during

the two-year period; and indeed, for a solid twelve months of that time, to my mingled chagrin and relief. I found myself completely impotent. I do not know to this day either the cause, or the cure, for that condition, and most certainly I told nobody about it. Perhaps it was some black bitter stream of hostility toward women, or for that matter, toward men, or fear of reprisal for my "sins," or terror at the threat of marriage.

For all during the first semester of school, in 1931, I had been penning ardent letters to Mavis, and even planning, in an age which knew little of such things, marriage while still attending school.

"Furnished cottage. Modern, suitable for married student. Walking distance from University. Price \$23 with garage," read a want-ad which I clipped out from the *Journal-World* and sent to my loved one.

On Christmas Eve, I presented her with a miniscule diamond solitaire, which had set me back twenty dollars at Finklea's on Polk Street, money which I had earned as an extra parcel-post carrier during the Christmas rush. Certainly we loved each other, and just as certainly the obvious solution evaded both of us; something, perhaps The Genteel Tradition, kept her from coming to Lawrence, getting a job and working toward her degree, the one known to a later generation as P.H.T., Putting Husband Through. I never dreamed of asking her to do this, and probably she never dreamed of doing it; and so it was that, three months or so later, during the Easter vacation of 1932, after three years of putting up with my posturing and jealousy, my indecision and emotional shadow-boxing, she told me that we were through. Unluckily for her, she had, in a slip-up which would have warmed the heart of a Freudian psychiatrist, left her engagement ring on the washstand in the bathroom at our house, and I picked it up and then hypocritically helped her "search" for it, only to write her a long and windy letter, telling her I had the ring, and reproaching her for her conduct, penning my epistle on the train which bore me back toward Lawrence late that afternoon.

I kept the ring, and gave it to my sister Jane, and Mavis never saw it again; but the worst part of the story seems to be that, within a week of this happening, I was again writing those same ardent letters, and carrying on as if nothing had occurred. Well, for God's sake, enough was enough, and late in the year 1932, Mavis had the good sense to marry a pleasant, capable feed and grain man from Clovis, New Mexico, with whom she moved out of town and pretty much out of my life forever.

While on the subject of crime, it might be noted that during my last semester in school, when I found a casebook of mine missing,

and being inured to deprivation but not to disappointment. I merely picked up another one which belonged to one Jacobson, and have not returned it to this day. "I owe a black cock to Aesculapius": indeed I do, like Socrates; and perhaps in this narrative at the mention of these and of other unpaid debts one may be tempted to retitile it *Sweet Creep. I Have Been Beastly*.

At the end of the spring semester of 1932, Rick, for all his diligence, failed a subject or two, and did not return to school that Fall. Those were the days when you could mosey in and out of the doors of medical schools, and for that matter, law schools, and in the spring of 1933, he came back to Lawrence for another go at his career.

In the Fall of 1932, I had roomed at the house of Dr. Dailey, a local dentist and a friend of our family, and there I had met a fellow-roomer, one Fox Mahaffey. Fox was a lean handsome Arrow-Collar man from Kay See, no less, blond-haired, and with a gay and witty manner, especially when things were all going his way. In addition, Fox was that *rara avis*, a college student with his own automobile, a 1930 Model A convertible, complete with wire wheels and rumble seat. Fox was a business major and something of a B.M.O.C., for all that he had broken with his fraternity and was now living the life of a barb along with me at the Dailey's. He had a seat on the Student Council, had served with distinction in Allen Crafton's dramatic troupe and had a nice way with intermission-piano.

He and I became fast friends, and in the spring semester, when Rick returned, both of us moved out of the Dailey's, which was a heartless thing to do to any landlady in the middle of the school year. I cared not a fig however, as I threw my suitcase into the rumble seat of Fox's car, and with him drove down to our new place, a boarding house kept by two mad-cap newly married friends of his from Kansas City.

At the new place, with the advent of Rick, Fox and I rented a piano, and the two of them spent happy hours, either solo or with four-handed arrangements of "Sweet Sue," and "Bye, Bye, Blackbird."

When the fun-times were over, and the semester ended, Rick and I both stayed on for summer school, and I went over to Topeka to take the State bar exams. After two solid days of writing, the grades were announced, and I, along with four or five other hapless ones, out of a contingent of eighty-odd, saw our names posted as failures.

Nothing daunted, I coolly signed up for summer school, and, finishing out the semester with a couple of C's, went on up to our summer cabin in Colorado with Fox and Buzz Elder. A few days

later we were joined by Rick, and we all four spent a week swaggering around the Pike's Peak region in Buzz' convertible, like young English milords on the Grand Tour.

At the end of that idyll, I went back home. It had been three years now, since 1930, and here I was, age twenty-five and back again in Amarillo in the Fall, the very model of a *chevalier sans peur et sans monnaie*. I had no license to practice law and no desire to do so; but for a year or so I had known what I wanted to do, and now I set about doing it.

# # #

"Into my heart an air that kills  
 From yon far country blows:  
 What are those blue remembered hills,  
 What spires, what farms are those?  
 That is the land of lost content,  
 I see it shining plain,  
 The happy highways where I went  
 And cannot come again."

*Lost Content.* It would do nicely for a title; it was short, it was fashionably elegaic, and the quote from *A Shropshire Lad* would let the reader know that the author was a man of very hoity-toity literary taste indeed. All that I had to do now, was to jack it up and wheel a novel underneath it, bolt the whole thing into place, and be ready for the road.

Into the upstairs room then, which was already crowded with two beds, a huge varnished cedar chest and Mother's black-oak secretary, I moved my typewriter table and the writing machine itself, and sat me down to be a novelist.

To the astonishment of both family and friends, whatever else I had been in other fields, I proved to be a tiger in this one. Some inkling of this facility I may have had from my literary experience during those last months in law school, when I had published extensively in the campus humor magazine *The Sour Owl*. Then, book reviews, short-short stories and satirical quatrains had gushed forth like water from Moses' rock, and now in Amarillo I had no trouble at all in knocking off three or four thousand words, an entire chapter in rough draft, every day. Whole paragraphs, scenes, phrases, conversations, boiled up and surged through my mind, and I would dream up pages of dialogue in my sleep.

It was a time of high exhilaration, to feel the stuff spinning out endlessly from the depths of my being, to feel it being pulled through the wire-drawing block and to see it coming out shaped, narrowed down, polished and coiled, the end-product ready for use. This, and the secret unholy glee of the author as he re-reads his own words, all this was the greatest joy I had ever known.

The fact that I knew little or nothing of what I was about, trou-

bled me not one whit: my success in the most vital enterprise of my life, the winning and holding of my parents' love, had made me feel invincible, and week after week, month after month, I banged merrily away on the old eighty-pound upright with the cast-iron frame, working from eight to five on week-days and until one on Saturdays, the way God (and the Santa Fe Railway) had ordained it.

During the make-over of the house three years before, half of the downstairs area had been converted into a separate apartment, and now in 1933, with half of the family gone, this space, together with the other upstairs bedroom, was thriftily rented out.

At night I slept in the same room with my parents, on a folding cot covered with a gray Army blanket from World War I. My bed had a comfortable spring of wire mesh suspended between its yellow-pine rails, and my Thoreauvian soul thrilled at its simplicity, and doubtless my infantile nature at sleeping once more in the same room with Mummy and Daddy. They were in their mid-fifties by then, and I got the impression that slumber was about the only thing going on in the big Victorian double-bed with the carved walnut head-board and the treacherous slats.

In any event, Mother was gone most of the time, caroming around the country like a billiard ball, visiting now Manon, now Jane, spending a few days with Rick at Lawrence or with the Hughes family in Topeka, dropping in for a week-end with the Spencers in Colorado Springs.

To pay for my board and keep, I cleaned house and cooked for Dad. After the bacon, eggs and toast, at eight or so I would trip upstairs to the chamber and throw wide the high little window on my left, the magic casement opening on Madison Street and on the sound of Santa Fe switch engines a mile to the East. At quarter to twelve I would scurry back downstairs, whip up some corn muffins, open a can or two, pour some milk into tumblers, and at noon, Dad would come stepping across the park, and he and I would sit down in the breakfast nook for lunch.

At night he and I strolled around Ellwood Park, flourishing our walking sticks, and violating the night air with the strophes of Cowper and Elinor Wylie, or perhaps of Chesterton's "Lepanto" for which we both had a weakness.

"But Don John of Austria has burst the battle line!"

we would declaim, decapitating, on the blood-drenched quarter-deck, one Turk after another as we lashed at the pebbles on the sidewalk.

We never discussed my work, and in part that may have been because on the face of it, there was not much to discuss. Certainly the plot of the novel, its locale and characters were simple to the



point of simple-mindedness; a young male college student, in a university town with a libelous resemblance to Lawrence, was in love with the wife of his mentor, a professor with a libelous resemblance to one Garth Fleeker.

Professor Fleeker I had known in law school. He was a lithe, athletic figure, his graying hair worn in a crew-cut, a hair style which in those days was pretty much confined to the locker-room set. A restless, driven creature, he would pace the lecture platform like a caged leopard with the crabs, tossing his arms and spouting quips and anecdotes in his attempt to make his course breathing and warm to the touch.

"You are called out of your bed at midnight, to drive across the prairie eighteen miles in a sleet-storm, to write the will of John Doe, an old farmer who is *in extremis* and who now wishes to make a nuncupative will. He wants to leave Whiteacre to his son John and then to his male issue and their heirs in perpetuity (does he mean children, and if so, those on the sinister, or merely those on the dexter side of the shield?). Blackacre is to go to his sister Joanna, but if she ever be declared *non compos*, then to her daughters, *per capita* and not *per stirpes*, and excluding Eliza who left on the noon train eight years ago with the drummer from St. Louis; and Greenacre he leaves to his brother Ahab, for so long as the old oak tree shall stand, and after that, to the Four Corners M. E. Church if it continues to preach sound gospel; if it does not, then to the Republican Party of Kansas."

"You have as reference books, the King James Version of the *Bible*, a *Cardui Almanac*, a Montgomery Ward catalogue with only the slick pages left, and four back issues of *Capper's Farmer*. Make the old man's will, make it legal and binding. Place your papers on the desk as you leave. The honor system, as always, is in effect. Good hunting, gentlemen."

I idolized Fleeker, and bragged on knowing him to the Baron, only to be told one week-end in Topeka that my idol was now confined at Menninger's where the Baron was then working.

"We've got him under observation," said Hans with a touch of malicious satisfaction. "At K.U. they caught him peeking in the window at some sorority house; out at Uncle Karl's, when they brought him in, he was babbling about organizing a place where college kids, boys and girls, could live together and be happy."

After that, Garth Fleeker, the seer with the cracked crystal ball, the unwitting prophet-without-honor of the co-ed dorm, dropped out of my life; but his image, that of the beloved but bedevilled professor, would arise time and again in my later writings.

During August of the same year, 1933, while Buzz, Fox and I

were wandering around Cripple Creek. I had met a deep-chested blonde, a woman with a ready laugh and a pretty daughter. A la Stendhal, during a polite, brief afternoon's visit, I had fallen for the mother, and now she showed up in the novel as Mrs. Fleeker. As young romantic academics, she and Garth strolled the autumn woods, pausing now and then to enjoy sexual intercourse on the sward, to "die the little death among the leaves," as I must confess to having phrased it.

Mrs. Fleeker, however, it appeared, did more than die little deaths among the leaves; she was fond also of expiring among her living-room couch-cushions, and with some of her husband's male students at that.

As one of those, and as the central figure in the book, I lounged with her one evening before an odorous fire of oak logs, and in the course of events stripped her blouse from her, rooted her breasts out of the camisole and caressed and kissed them in the firelight. Following that, fool that I was, I rushed out of the house and down to the river bridge, where I spent the rest of the night watching the water rush over the dam. The next June I was graduated and went back home, where I received the news that while on an assignment in a neighboring big town, she had jumped to her death from the twentieth story of a posh hotel which bore a strong resemblance to the Muehlebach in Kansas City. I read the letter which bore the news, walking back home from the post office (what was I doing getting my mail there?); walking back home then, in sorrow, after the style of Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*, but not to the sound of falling rain but rather to that of spent autumn leaves rustling along the street.

Meanwhile, back at Reality-Ranch, in the late winter, probably around the end of February, 1934, I had ripped the last page of final draft from the typewriter, and now after all my toil, was ready for name and fame. I had laid my money on the counter and was ready for my candy.

One of the Baron's K. U. girl-friends had been Amanda Moseby, a gentle-mannered, motherly soul who played the clarinet and could quote Vachel Lindsay. I had kept up a literary correspondence with her over the years, she who had now married and moved to Cambridge, and from her I had the name of Virginia Rice, a literary agent in Manhattan. With visions of sugar-plums, (Loki Tay, Rich-and-Famous-Author), dancing through my head, and with a tenderness that would have done credit to the Blessed Mother at the Entombment, I laid the five or six hundred sheets of indifferently typed manuscript back in their cardboard box and bundling it all up with butcher's paper and twine which I got from Barton's Grocery,

wagged it down to the post-office and shipped it to New York.

It was said of Anthony Trollope that he was the sort of unfeeling hack who would finish one novel in the morning and begin another one in the afternoon. I don't know that I did that exactly, but within a day or so after sending the first novel away, I was hard at work on the second. My days resumed their old routine, but by then my nights were occupied less with Dad and more with Melanie Rambo.

Early in the Fall, when I had first settled down in Amarillo, I had been visited in our home by Dr. Thomsen, the brawny Dane who was pastor of the Central Presbyterian flock. It was the first, and perhaps the last time that any minister had ever come to our house, and I was even more bowled over when he revealed the purpose of his visit. A few nights later I found myself in charge of a small class of college kids who were studying the world's great religions.

Again, I had no idea of what I was doing, but again my brow was unfurrowed as I stumbled around, reading from the text and making a few sidebar remarks of a Unitarian cast. My liberalism cost me at least one pupil, who threw himself from the boat in Fundamentalist despair, but in the front row sat and giggled two recent female graduates of Amarillo High School, and one of them was Melanie Rambo.

She was tall and fine-boned, with small breasts and a vivacious way of shaking her marcelled, auburn locks. She had a piquant, triangular face with high cheek bones and a brave, lifted chin, the sort of girl who makes a good wife for a man to take to a convention, faithful and pure, with aristocratic legs and a winning manner.

She was a freshman at the Amarillo Junior College, then in its cradle-days, and a dramatic major who carried her art over into her life. Rick and I nicknamed her La Gatta, after a *Satevepost* illustrator famed for his portrayal of graceful haughty types who were always being handed into chauffeur-driven Pierce Arrows beneath the porte-cocheres of swank restaurants. In Melanie I felt that at last I had met an F. Scott Fitzgerald girl, one whose voice trembled with barely suppressed excitement, with whom you knew that just around the corner awaited something that was sure to be wistfully beautiful and thrilling, immense fun and doubtless very expensive.

When I first knew her, she lived over on Washington Street, within two or three blocks of our house, and one day of snow I was out in the front yard building a snow-man, or rather a snow-woman, nostalgically firming-up a torso which displayed great swelling breasts. I looked up to see Melanie coming down the walk toward me, in a blue coat trimmed with some light brown fur. She was bare-headed, and the falling snow powdered her unbound hair, some of the flakes clinging to her eyelashes, melting and then rolling

down her cheeks like tears. Her galoshes flapped around her ankles and her azure eyes brimmed with delight. She trilled "Oh hello. there." avoiding any notice of my mammary creation, and, the bathos of it all, I promptly took her into the house for a high tea of Lipton's finest and some of my own sugar cookies.

This all happened during the winter, and I was in love with Melanie from that day on, although I felt none of the wrenching anguish and passion that I had known with Mavis. She grew to care for me, too, although she never became very ardent, and her kisses remained sweet but domestic.

"Is this your favorite spot?" she would pout whenever I reined the old Pontiac over to the curb on the outskirts of town for a spot of necking, and I would say nothing, and in disgust drive on back to town.

The hemline in those barren years was about halfway down to the ankle, and Melanie like many other girls rolled her hose below the knee. Sometimes when I was seated at her feet I would lift her skirts and kiss her bare knees, an act of fealty which apparently neither aroused nor alarmed her.

She liked our household, and both Dad and Mother were glad of her company. "Just look at all the books!" she cried on her first visit, and was duly impressed when I helped her with a class assignment, finding for recitation a piece of dramatic parody, the scene where Falstaff and Prince Hal "stand" for each other.

My other friends, Bob and Gertie Tillotson, together with John and Nora Brandon, considered her a bit too starchy for their mild Bohemian tastes, although with them we played practical jokes and participated in gags, running through Ellwood Park at night shouting, "The dam has broke!" and putting ducks into each other's bath tubs.

It was only natural that I chose Melanie as the heroine for the new novel.

"When I came back to Lyonesse  
With magic in my eyes,  
All marked with mute surmise  
My radiance rare and fathomless,  
When I came back from Lyonesse  
With magic in my eyes!"

I had been reading Thomas Hardy's poem in my *Anthology of Modern Verse*, and once more had a prestigious quotation and a romantic title.

As locale for *Magic in Her Eyes* I deserted the Halls of Ivy for the Staked Plains, and began a historical novel about Amarillo in the 1870's.

I did not bother much with research, feeling that such activity was somehow beneath the notice of a Creative Artist, and began whacking away at the first draft in the style of Michelangelo mounting a frontal attack on a fresh block of marble. In spite of the fact that Melanie was the heroine, none of the characters in the book were memorable beyond Bent Clisbee, the old stagecoach driver. I had run across this wonderful name, that of a real person, and had gone ahead and used it, after the fashion of Balzac, who used to go snooping around Paris, searching for character-names in the signs of shop-keepers. (Did he, one wonders, ever happen upon the Goriot Laundry and Dry Cleaning, or perchance, Cousine Bette's Pizza Parlor?)

Bent Clisbee, then; the book was written a la Joseph Hergesh-eimer, full of brocaded prose and literary quotation. It involved a train wreck, vignettes of life in an orphanage, and a frigid woman who was awakened sexually by being flogged with a black-snake whip. The woman was not the heroine, but perhaps it was Melanie that I had in mind all along.

By the middle of May 1934, my one hundred and twenty-five thousand words were packaged and on their way to New York, where *Lost Content* was still being hawked about the literary marketplace by the faithful Virginia Rice. Now, with Novel Number Two under my belt (there was nothing to this writing business, really), I resumed my old wandering listless ways and, by now twenty-six but still equipped with my annual passes, entrained for a month's visit on the East Coast.

# # #

The city of Boston was my primary target, and once arrived there, I found my way to the apartment of my old K.U. friend Amanda and her spouse Arlo Hornbeam. Dr. Hornbeam was a tawny-haired man of enormous drive and versatility, with already a burgeoning reputation as a marine biologist. Their Cambridge flat was crammed with books and records; both of them were writing science-fiction and revelling in the artistic and literary life which centered around Harvard Yard.

For a week or so I sponged off them, gambolling in this heady cultural surf, visiting in at least two households which kept up a *ménage-à-trois*, attending Gilbert and Sullivan operettas and Communist-cell meetings, eating my first Chinese food, and sipping mead which Arlo made in his lab from fermented honey. With Becky Shadrach, the hard-muscled, big-titted Jewish playmate whom they found for me, I went swimming in Walden Pond. We had not brought any swim suits, so it was an unpremeditated dip, both of us stripping to our underwear and plunging in, and afterwards drying our garments by holding them up above our heads as we rode back home in the rumble seat. (Thoreau, we felt, would have been delighted). All this was very fine, but pretty soon it was time to get at the real business of my visit. Ever since that fateful day in Chicago more than four years before, I had been plagued by chronic, vaguely located, but none the less painful gripings in the gut, having apparently taken on some of Mother's psychological protective coloring.

"Mother, damn it, there's just no such pain known to medical science!" Rick would shout after she had detailed some stricture which began at the toes, ran up and around the thorax and terminated at the left elbow; and now, in Boston, between visits to museums and libraries I was sandwiching in out-patient calls at the Lahey Clinic. Probably just as baffled as Rick was in the case of Mother, the grave and worthy internists finally sent me to the hospital for five days' observation, and in the afternoon of Memorial Day, 1934, laden with gloom, I duly registered as a patient at the Deaconess.

Jane was there of course, still working toward her "cap," and over

the previous week or so we had managed a few scattered visits. She had remained robust, cheerful and handsome, a pink-cheeked girl, blue-eyed and fair-haired, not too much interested in men, and at this period in her life much set upon by bull-dykes.

After loafing around the wards for a few days and swallowing enough barium test-meal to float a battleship, I was released, clutching a prescription of bella donna and of some white powder packaged in paper spills, with the consistency, and so far as I could ever tell, the efficacy, of blackboard chalk.

On the way back to Texas I stopped off in Washington to visit Manon and Duke and to wheel my newly born niece Carole through the pathways of Rock Creek Park. After a few days in the Capitol, I went on to Kansas City, where Buzz Elder was planning to marry Lalage Dayvault.

Lalage was a delightfully fey and lissom creature, gray-eyed and light-footed, a bride who would be sure to let the biscuits burn while immersed in the poetry of Don Blanding, he who was the Rod McKuen of his day. For all Buzz' steady job at Pan Am, they were short of cash, and she and I merrily roamed the country lanes of Jackson County, plucking wild flowers with which to decorate the church.

In due time I went on home to Amarillo, but paused there only for a week or so, not much longer than it would take to get my laundry done and to have a few more nice-time dates with Melanie. Early in July I packed up once more and stood again on the station-platform, but this time, at that of the Fort Worth and Denver; I slapped Dad on the back, got a tremulous but closed-mouth kiss from La Gatta, and was off for Colorado to write Novel Number Three.

The eastern half of Colorado is mostly plains, and the western half mostly mountains. Just about mid-way in the boundary line between the two, and seventy-five miles south of Denver, you will find Colorado Springs, facing the prairies to the East and backed up to the Rockies to the West.

In the mid-Thirties and long before, it was famed as a spa and summer resort, a place of quiet "Eastern" culture and broad pine-shaded streets. It was then a town of about thirty-five thousand, and its six thousand foot altitude and the mineral springs out at Manitou drew tourists and invalids alike. Among the invalids was Jane Spencer, Mother's Deaconess friend who had come here with her family before 1910 to "chase the cure" for t.b.

Over the years we had visited this soul-mate of Mother's many times, and in 1928 for three hundred dollars had bought from her sister Merrie the cabin at Woodland Park. This little mountain

town, with a winter population of about four hundred, lay twenty miles to the North, where the road to Cripple Creek made a sharp left turn to circle around the foothills of Pike's Peak. The Midland Terminal Railroad, on which naturally I had an annual pass, had been built long before, to bring the ore down from the gold fields. In 1934 it still served this purpose, but its passenger traffic had dwindled away: by then this was served by a single Diesel car which chugged its way through sixty miles of spectacular Alpine scenery in the morning and which rattled back down through it in the afternoon.

Now, around noon in the middle of July 1934, I dismounted at the little station with my gear, the old brown Gladstone, and the typewriter with its home-made cover of black oilcloth. It was only two or three blocks up the red-sandy road to the cabin, but I made two trips of it, panting in the clear, cool air, a mile and a half above sea-level.

The little log house, just sixteen by sixteen, sat on a hillside, in typical Tay fashion just a little above and a little to one side of the town itself, in an aloof but non-competitive location. I was in a valley, here, and pausing at the door I could see the long, even horizon of the Rampart Range high above me to the East, and, turning to the South, the unbelievable red granite hump of Pike's Peak towering almost three miles in the air. Blue jays screeched among the giant pines in the yard, and later on I would see the striped little chipmunks and the gray squirrels scooting around and kicking up the fragrant pine needles.

The cabin was equipped with all the tin table-ware and cracked plates of two generations, all the ragged quilts and old Army pants of our Topeka days. From the brass faucet above the iron sink I could get icy mountain water which had to be heated on the wood-burning stove; lighting came from two or three coal-oil lamps, and seating from a mixed bag of arthritic camp-chairs and rockers. A food-hutch of red brick and sand was built up against the north wall, and an unpainted one-holer john stood at the rear.

Here I settled down in approved Thoreauvian fashion, listening to the wind in the pines and to the hooting of the triple-engined ore trains in the dead of night. I sat my typewriter on the hand-made pine table in the sunny end of the front porch, and began, as of yore, knocking off my chapter a day. Late in the afternoon and well before the Diesel came back down the line, I would hustle off my daily letter to Melanie. I had no timepiece, but created a sun-dial from the doorpost and a pencil-line which I marked off on the floor of the porch.

I would take my mail down then, and pick up any which had



come up that morning from the Springs, perhaps a letter from Melanie or my monthly thirty-dollar check from Dad. After buying a quart of milk and ten cents worth of candy for dessert, I would go back to the cabin and from there on up through the woods in back of me, hunting for a pine-stump to carry home and cut up for firewood. By then it would be time to light the lamps and to heat up a can of Van Camp's baked beans for dinner and a washtub-full of bath water. After dinner I would settle down and read for an hour or so, fiction being the usual fare, F. Scott's *Tender is the Night*, or *Kidnapped* by Stevenson. Then, taking my dog-stick, I would set out for a three-mile walk, up the road toward Cripple Creek, down the cut-off and then back to town, perhaps stopping off for a chat with Saler the druggist or with Hunter Merrill, whose people had in the past owned most of the town.

On Saturday nights a little string band would come to the Woodman's Hall, and I might go down for the dance, on one or two occasions taking Flo Merrill, whom I thought of as "the dark-eyed village belle," with me.

From time to time I had house-guests, Rick, Dad and Mother, and, in August, the Elders from Kansas City. Buzz and Lalage were on a brief, delayed honeymoon, during which I tactfully moved my cot out into the yard and slept beneath the stars, in the daytime reading poetry with her and trying with a total lack of success to show him how to chop wood.

For the novel which I was then writing, I have always had a sneaking affection. Its prose was simple and direct, the kind of prose that book reviewers refer to as "sinewy"; its locale was Woodland Park, and its time was the present.

The plot was time-worn but still serviceable. I was a "wholesale man," whatever the hell *that* was, and had come up from Dallas with my family to spend a summer vacation in the mountains. My wife, Char, for Charlotte, was a strong-minded but affectionate creature, and our young son was a shadowy figure whom in a fit of japery we had nicknamed Jukes. Every year we came up to our cabin on the hillside, and every year we renewed acquaintance with our mutual friend Jordanne Seevers.

Jordanne, a sultry brunette of wayward charm and easy morals lived at the Broadmoor Hotel down in Colorado Springs and drove a sixteen-cylinder Cadillac. Just what Jordanne saw in me, a Chevrolet-two-door man if ever there was one, I have not been able to discover; but once or twice during every vacation, I would tippy-toe down to the lovely resort hotel at the foot of Cheyenne Mountain and sneak up to her suite for an afternoon of love-making. My rival for her affections was Sid Kross, a Levantine Jew patterned after

the Count in *The Sun Also Rises*, and the plot moved swiftly to its climax, the discovery of my romance by Charlotte and the subsequent death of Jordanne while on a picnic with us at the top of Gold Hill: my wife and girl-friend had wandered away together, down a path that led by a sixty-foot prospect hole, and only Charlotte had come back. (Old Sid and I were both fit to be tied.) Prior to all that Char had ridden a horse to death, a stallion that she could not break, and now, at the end of the book, " 'Come on to bed,' she told me, 'come on to bed and forget it.' "

By early November I was done with the first draft, the weather was turning chilly, the yellow-dollar leaves were all gone from the aspens up and down the Pass, the roof was beginning to leak and the milk to freeze if left out overnight.

I trudged up the road with a long-handled shovel, climbed a fence over into somebody's field, and without a by-your-leave uprooted and clumsily balled in burlap a couple of blue spruce trees for our front yard in Amarillo. I boarded up the cabin then, and caught the afternoon-special, to go back home so as to polish up the novel and to see if there was any room left for me in the heart of Melanie.

There was, I found, no great difficulty there. With a kingly gesture, I strolled back into her affections and drew up a chair. There was even, later on in the winter, an unexpected offer of assistance from another quarter.

"You and Melanie seem to be getting serious," my father observed one evening. "Why don't you two just get married, settle down in the little cottage next door, you go on with your writing, or maybe get a job teaching out at the Junior College. I'm making enough money for everybody, and anyhow, the way I see it, only one man in a family ought to be working, the others should just enjoy themselves while they can. Later on, when I get too old, you can take over, then maybe Rick. What do you think about *that*?"

Well, it appeared that, now we had got down to the meat in the coconut, I really felt very little about it. By this time it was late in February 1935, and although the final draft of Novel Number Three was ready for the mail chute, still, Numbers One and Two remained unpublished. That Railway Express truck, which like Shorty George was no friend of mine, had stopped too often in front of our house. The publishers to whom I had been sending my other works after Virginia Rice had given up on them, had taken all too literally my instruction to return the manuscript "Express Collect." I would hear the squeal of the brakes outside and look out the window and then tramp sorrowfully downstairs to fork out a buck or so and to welcome the unwelcome bastard child once more back home.

There were doubtless a lot of other influences, more or less wor-

thy of respect, at work. I had always been greedy for experience; and impatience is a form of greed, just as curiosity is a form of desire. At some time during my writing career, I had stopped at a Rexall pharmacy at Sixteenth and Van Buren, and had seen at the curb outside, a snappy green Hudson Super-Six filled with Amarillo debs, some of the Bist girls and a Givins or two amongst them. They were sipping cokes, and I longed to join them, to be a literary lion amongst the adoring lambs. "Some day," I muttered darkly, feeling like Ben Franklin on his first morning in Philadelphia, "some day —"; and now it was a year or so later, and literary fame, along with fortune and the glittering salons of Potter County seemed more remote than ever.

Then, too, I felt that I must escape Mother, whose benign, overpowering influence I was beginning to feel pressing on me like the fourteen pounds of atmosphere of which we are all unaware, but which is there just the same, weighing down upon us awake or asleep. Also I was probably once more feeling spooky as an old range steer, at the prospect of matrimony.

Then too, I was not unprepared for a whirl on another merry-go-round, another grab at another brass ring. More than a year before, in January, 1934, I had spent a week or so hunched over the books in the state law library at Topeka, and upon taking the bar exam once more, had passed it, albeit, I suspected, with drooping rather than flying colors. Following my admission to the Kansas Bar then, and taking advantage of the warm, happy reciprocity of those days, I had little trouble in also securing a legal hunting-license from the State of Texas.

Yes, it was time to be moving on, impelled by those, and doubtless other obscure, forces; so, happily ignorant of Freud's maxim that we flee to instead of from, I arose and twitched my mantle blue, tomorrow to fresh fields and pastures new; and, while I was twitching, packed two bags and got once more my violin and a copy of Thomas Wolfe's *Of Time and The River* (I would need both of those, surely) and, age twenty-seven, and still "Loki Tay, Dependent Son, Howard H. Tay, AGFPA P&SF Ry.," yes, age twenty-seven, and beginning to silver-up a little at the temples, set out for Dallas to practice law.

# # #

*PART THREE*

*BIG D: DEVELOPMENT OF THEME*

"I have just arrived here. I was never in the circumstances before that I am in now, going to a strange city, seeking employment."

Thus Howard Tay, age twenty-two, writing to Nora Franey from Sault Ste. Marie in May 1901, with his business-school diploma in his satchel and probably ten silver dollars in his purse. And now, nearly thirty-four years later, on the train for Dallas, behold Howard's son in somewhat the same situation, but with two college degrees, a fistful of railroad passes and a couple of signed blank checks.

I had been to Dallas before, once to register with a teachers' employment bureau, and several times with Dad while he attended a rate hearing, or with Rick while he visited his girl friend Vilia Mae Grandison. To me Dallas was what Kay See had been when I had lived in Lawrence—"and far off, far-faint and broken by the wind, he heard the wailing cry of the great train, bringing to him again its wild and secret promises of flight and darkness, new lands, and a shining city."

I read on and on, in the heavy green-bound volume of Thomas Wolfe, as my own train, in those days a thing of a dozen or so cars and crowded with passengers, rolled on toward the magic city nearly four-hundred miles to the South-East, through Childress, Vernon and Wichita Falls, Bowie and Decatur, down off the Caprock and through the Cross-Timbers, leaving behind the mesquite and tumbleweed, and coming into the domain of the post-oak and scrub cedar, the pecan and the orange-hearted bois d'arc, into a semi-tropical blackland belt just short of the sandy loam and piney woods of East Texas. Compared to Amarillo's 3600-foot elevation, that of Dallas County averaged about 550, and its latitude was roughly that of Damascus, Alexandria and Marrakesh, of San Diego, Charleston and the Bermudas.

One of the more baronial characters of Ludwig Bemelmans is pictured, in the course of the day, as passing from one expert and highly-paid pair of hands to another; from those of masseur, barber and chef, on to those of riding-master and mistress (one gathered that those last two were separate persons), and finally, at the end of the day, soothed and smoothed, and perhaps by then longing for

solitude, to those of his wife.

In like case, having made arrangements to stay with the Grandisons, I too was passing from one loving household to another. Our families had long been friends and had visited back and forth in a leisurely ante-bellum fashion. Three or four years previously, Vilia Mae and her mother whom we knew as Ma, had spent a summer in Amarillo, coming over to our house for lunch or dinner every day while Rick helped Vilia Mae with her zoology. The previous semester she had developed a mental block with that subject which only a pleasant good-looking young medical student could hope to shatter.

"This girl right stout and well developed was

With nose tip-tilted and eyes blue as glass,

With buttocks broad and round breasts full and high,

But golden was her hair, I do not lie."

Vilia Mae was a church soprano of fine repute, a girl as cool and wholesome as a scoop of vanilla ice cream and with a laugh like the ringing of fine crystal. Over the years she and Rick had worked out a sugar-and-spice romance, in the course of which it is doubtful if he kissed her more than a score of times, and those upon state occasions.

Now, early in the evening my train pulled into the white-tiled Roman-Doric magnificence of the Dallas Union Terminal, and I found Ma Grandison and her husband Abner waiting for me on the platform. Soon enough I was clambering into their highdomed Dodge sedan and was being chauffeured across the Trinity River and into Oak Cliff.

This snug little suburb, formerly called Hord's Ridge, with its limestone cliffs and cedar brakes, was easily the most picturesque part of town, although the elite, like the "blind men" of Constantinople's history, preferred the bald prairie-lands which stretched to the North on the other side of the river. Here in Oakie Cliff, as it was known to the snobbish, lunch was "dinner" and dinner was "supper"; the men worked six days a week while the more affluent of the women stayed at home and read *Good Housekeeping*; on Sundays everybody went to church, to the Assembly of God tabernacles or to hearken to the athletic Baptist Fundamentalism of Dr. Wallace Bassett.

The Grandisons lived in a roomy two-story green and white clapboard house on South Marsalis beyond Clarendon, and thither I went that evening to spend the first night of many thousands as a resident of Dallas.

The Grandison family, one of the first that I knew to have His and Her automobiles, were in a happy ferment. Their twenty-year old son Dale, a tall, slender smoothie with a musical bent, was stay-

ing at home after a year or so at Texas A. and M., helping his father with the cotton-gin repair business but pining for the glamor of a career as clarinetist with a dance-band.

"Those guys get to live in hotels," he breathed, telling me of a recent job opportunity, "no kidding, in *hotels*," and lying back on the bed, reached over to the radio with a languid gesture and tuned in The Camel Caravan.

Vilia Mae, her romance with Rick long since blown along a wandering wind, had taken on a new love, and with it a major in education at North Texas State. She was trembling on the brink of graduation and much taken up with concerts, parties and plays: Both Ma and Dale took an active interest in all that and visited her frequently, taking me with them, chugging along in the old blue Dodge over the tricky, suicidal, two-lane blacktop to Denton, thirty-five miles to the Northwest. While Ma fussed around with arrangements, Dale and I flirted with the coeds in Vilia Mae's dorm. I was happy to be back in the atmosphere of a campus in general and of a girls' rooming-hall in particular, blind to the consequences which all this was to have on my life a year or so later.

All during this time, nothing was said about the proposed length of my stay with the family, and naturally nothing about my going out to look for a job. After all, insofar as the job was concerned, I was three or four years late already, and a few more weeks couldn't do any permanent injury.

Finally though, my forays amongst the dovescotes of Smiley Hall tapered off, and squaring my yards to sail, I warped my fragile bark out of the harbor and into the open sea.

By this time, I had wangled from good Dean Mavis a cagily worded letter which some myopic interviewer might be persuaded to take as a recommendation, and now I fared forth into the world, hitching a ride downtown with Ab in the morning and coming back on the street car in the afternoon. At this time the big firms such as Thompson, Knight, or Locke and Locke were skimming the top off graduating classes at salaries that started at eighty or a hundred a month, and some firms would ask a man to work the first six months or so just for the experience. In some ways, this bore out the observation of my Torts professor Tourneau that "About all you're going to learn in your first year of practice anyhow, is where the free phones and toilets are in the courthouse." By the middle of 1935 of course, the famine and heartbreak of the Great Depression still hovered over the land, but for all that, Dallas at this particular period wasn't a bad place to look for work.

The city then was less than a century old, although like both Topeka and Amarillo, it had known its early explorers, one of De

Soto's men, the Spaniard Alvarado, in 1542 and a couple of centuries later, the French trader Menzies. Before that, this had been a famous camping ground for prehistoric Indians, and in more recent times the Caddos and Cherokees had fought over the rich hunting preserves of bear, deer and buffalo, quail and wild turkey.

In a way, I was treading in the footsteps of the city's restless, moody founder; John Neely Bryan too, had been a lawyer from Tennessee when in 1839, in buckskins and with his Indian pony Neshoba, he came to a low bluff on the east bank of the Trinity and decided it would be a fine place to set up a ferry and trading post.

As a way-station and ford on the grandiloquently named National Central Highway of the Republic of Texas, it had prospered over the years, but its big break had come with the Panic of 1870. At that time, the Houston and North Central Railroad which had been inching its way up from Houston after the War Between the States, ground to a halt at Dallas and was stuck there for a couple of years. The terminus merchants — the "Corsicana Crowd" — mercantile camp-followers who catered to the construction crews, were stuck there also, and as the Panic deepened, settled down in Dallas, giving the hairy bustling frontier settlement its first tangy sips of affluence and refinement. By 1875 the little burg of five or six thousand was already being reported as a place that was wont to put on airs, and its *City Directory* for that year smugly asserted, "Probably no city in the state enjoys a more amiable reputation for morality."

Later on, in the days when Cotton was King and before it had been deposed by Rayon, it had become a great cotton town; power sewing machines began to hum along lower Commerce Street, and the great "rag merchants," the Kahns and Dreyfuss' set up shop; Al Neiman quit selling shoes for Sangers, and the year I was born, placed his first ads for the swank boutique which he had just opened in company with Herbert Marcus.

In the mid-Thirties, for all that it was a banking, fashion and insurance center "of about 250,000 souls and innumerable real estate agents," Dallas was still an agency town with a branch-office mentality, Basic-Baptist in ethics and religion, Southern-Democratic in manners and politics, Strike-It-Rich Western in its brag-and-fuss, and Reformed-Redneck in racial outlook. (The Klan had been big here in the Twenties.)

Well, all that and Dad Joiner too, he who in 1930 had brought in the great East Texas oil field one hundred miles to the East where, as Adolf Hitler once enviously remarked, "The oil just bubbles right up out of the ground." In Dallas, Eugene McElvaney at the First National and some other financial geniuses discovered that you



could lend money to oil field wildcatters and instead of being certified to Terrell for lunacy, find yourself smiling broadly at the end of the fiscal year.

The Depression then, lay but lightly on the town, and throughout those bitter times Dallas remained one of the few places in the nation that managed to stay in the black. I had, by guess and by gosh, picked the right town to come to; the right town insofar as opportunity went; how fit it was for me, or I for it, in other respects, the years ahead would show.

And so I stepped out into the benign, pure air of early Spring, and began beating the pavements for a job, strolling into this reception room and that, chatting pleasantly but without result with such lords of the realm as Lewis Rabinowitz and Neth Beachman, with Norrie Hughes and John Black; and then finally, one fateful day in late March, walking down Commerce Street and through the revolving doors of the Santa Fe Building.

This stolid brick pile reared its height nineteen stories above street level and about halfway on the mile-long slope which ran from the river on up to the City Hall. This had been the site of a spring, where almost a century before, a Lieutenant Miles and his little band of Indian-fighters who had just got their butts beat up in Wise County, had camped, to cure their wounds with mud and oak-ooze, to kill a buffalo for its hide and meat, and then to ford the Trinity and to move painfully back south toward the settlements.

Now in 1935, it was on the edge of the wholesale garment district and a long block from the hub of convention activity, where the two leading hotels, the Baker and the Adolphus, stared at each other across Akard Street. The Santa Fe itself took up a small part of the space, most of which was occupied by private tenants, and one of those, on the fourteenth floor, was Tewksbury Jackson.

At this time Tewk Jackson was about forty years old, a drawling rangy man with sandy hair and an incisive sarcastic wit. As I soon learned, he was from Albuquerque but had been in Dallas a long time, having graduated from being one of Currie McCutcheon's wily young prosecutors into a plaintiff's attorney specializing in criminal law and divorce.

I talked briefly with him; he was on the lookout for a young man who would do his leg work in exchange for a place to hang his hat. I was to sit where I could, catch-as-catch-can, ignominiously in the reception room or the library, but it was a chance, and in those days a chance was a chance was a chance. I said, "Sure" on the spot — and promptly went back to Amarillo for a week or so, dashing home for a final huddle around the hearth-fire before plunging again into the storm.

Once back in Dallas, on the 18th of April I reported for active duty, and settled down to practice law in the office of Tewk Jackson. The Santa Fe Building furnished a respectable enough address: it was not quite first-cabin like the Republic or First National Bank buildings a couple of blocks away, but on the other hand it was a far remove from the Slaughter Building or the second-story walk-ups on lower Main ("R. Skipf, Attorney at Law. Get Divorces").

Here, as was often the case at that time the ceilings were high, to catch the mythical Gulf breeze of summer, the heating was central, and cooling was accomplished to the groan and whirr of big wood-bladed overhead fans.

Tewk maintained a good working library, the *Southwestern Reporter*, *Texas Jurisprudence*, *Shepherd's Citator* and of course *Vernon's Annotated Texas Statutes*. These last, from their bindings of ebony buckram were known as the *Black Statutes*, a phrase which might have been that of some hapless bog-trotter confronted by a particularly odious bit of Cromwellian legislation: "Faith, and it's the Black Statutes they'll be enforcin' in Ireland this day, and the shame and sorrow of it."

I enjoyed Tewk and his casual bitter and picturesque speech, and I suppose he found in me the son he never had. At this time he employed a secretary, one who was pulling down the standard eighty bucks a month and contented as a Carnation cow to get it, but one day he observed me seated at her typewriter, knocking off a hundred or so words to the minute, and called me into his office.

"How'd you like to do my typing, isn't much of it, and I'd give you seven and a half a week, a little runnin' around, cigarette, money." It was a statement rather than a question, and I snapped at it like an under-privileged trout, although when pay-day came around, the stipend had somehow shrunk to six. I paid no mind to this, having inherited the precious quality of being able to "make do," along with the less precious one of meekness.

Years before, in the summer of 1930, I had picked up on my own the horn-book elements of Gregg shorthand, and now I set about being Tewk's secretary. There was precious little correspondence, and getting up the pleadings consisting mostly of filling out forms from *Moffatt's Texas Form Book* and then stapling them into the required blue legal-size manuscript covers.

Now and then I looked up some point of law for Tewk, running through the books, checking out the citation through Shepherd and occasionally going over to the firm of Locke, Locke, Stroud and Randolph for further enlightenment. There was then no County Law Library, and only the big defendants' firms like Thompson, Knight or "Locke, Locke, Stock and Barrel" kept up such expensive

sets as *Corpus Juris*, the full Reporter series and *A.L.R.*

I did the briefing then, although I was hurt later on to find our appellate work being conducted by a jolly, rotund balding little "office lawyer" by the name of Montgolfier. Perhaps this was just as well, for, being having read little beyond Kansas jurisprudence, I knew nothing of such arcane matters as community property or the law of special issues. Seeking knowledge, I took it upon myself to study, and in about six months read through the statutes and all their annotations, coming out not much wiser than before, however, and needing a change of glasses.

One of my principal chores was, every day or so, to make the courthouse run. The Dallas County Courthouse, like a heavy-hipped female overflowing a camp stool, squatted on a city block of land down at the lower end of Main Street. In olden times this had been the site of a Cherokee burying ground, but now it was occupied by a four-storied late-Victorian museum piece, its turrets and battlements of red sandstone towering above bastions of prison-gray granite. By 1935, almost half a century after the laying of its cornerstone, the cumbersome preposterous campanile had been torn down, and one of the gargoyles knocked off by a bolt of lightning. By this time also, the sandstone had begun to flake away, and shards of it big enough to behead a full-grown man lay about in the geranium beds which encircled the foundation. So far, no one of any political importance had been struck by these lethal fragments, and it would be another thirty years or so before a plastic preservative was sprayed over the crumbling surface. Within, the building's staircases were of ornamental black-enameled wrought iron and its one elevator bumpy and unsure of itself, and up and down these I wandered, going into the clerks' offices to pick up the assignment sheets.

These were huge billowing sheets of newsprint the size of a coffee table, and at the appointed hour the judge would call the docket *seriatim*, with the young lawyers waiting around to make their announcements, slouched in the captain's chairs inside the bar railing or lolling, insouciant and bored, in the highbacked swivel chairs of the jury box, flipping cigarette ashes into the brass spittoons and leering at the pretty, sad-eyed divorce clients in the back of the room.

This was the very life's blood of a lawyer's practice, to see to it that his cases were taken care of as they came up, so that he could plan to be on hand, hot-eyed and eager to announce ready if he were for the plaintiff, or to plead a prior duck-shooting date or a "previous setting in Ft. Worth, Your Honor, got some witnesses coming in from out of town," if he represented the defendant.

For a long time I had no cases of my own, but this presented no

real problem since I had no expenses to speak of. I was staying at the Grandisons rent-free, but along in June when Vilia Mae came home from school, my hosts requested their charming albeit non-rent-paying tenant to give up his room, and I moved into the downtown Y.M.C.A.

At the Y., I was only six blocks or so from the office, and about the same distance from High Five, the city jail at Main and Harwood. Thus I could easily run writs for Tewk at odd hours, and that summer I remember the thrill of venturing out into the city streets at night, striding along in white linen suit and Panama, the red fiber brief case stuck under one arm, feeling the heart of the great city beating around me, listening to the clang of the street-cars and peering into the all-night hamburger spots or Ray Allen's beer joint at Elm and Ervay.

The residence halls were located on the upper floors of the Y.M.C.A. proper, just up the hill from the walk-up whore-hotels of North Akard, around the corner from Dr. Floyd Poe's City Presbyterian and across the street from the famed First Baptist of George Truett. The Y. was then a new building, equipped with meeting halls, cafeteria and swimming pool, and here I settled in happily, living in a hotel-like atmosphere, free at last to come and go as I pleased.

The Y.M.C.A. atmosphere, that of steamy locker-rooms and piety was dear and familiar to me from my days in Topeka. I swam every night, riding down in the elevator in bathrobe and slippers, taking a long, hot shower and then plunging into the pool bare-assed naked along with the other flopping studs in their black-hair bikinis. Perhaps this was a final test of my earlier choice of sex; at any rate, I was not stirred, at least consciously, by this display of lustihood, although some of the pricks with their turgid swinging ballocks, did seem possessed of a certain noble grandeur, like the Taj Mahal viewed by moonlight.

All that aside, I soon found some friends, congenial souls with some of whom at Christmas I still exchange greeting-cards, snapshots, and happy lies concerned with virility, stock portfolios, and the beauty and talents of children. With some of these friends, Ashley Shale and Leonard Huffmeyer among others, I ran around town, occasionally taking in the Midnite Burlesque Ramble at the Joy or, in a more genteel mood, the Matrimonial Sweepstakes at the Y.W.C.A. There, at the Saturday night dance, the lonely broke young Christian men had a full opportunity to meet the lonely broke young Christian women, with easily predictable results. Admission was forty cents, but if you were not in funds you could work your way in by bearing a hand with the decorations in the

afternoon. In the course of this many a poor devil was shot down in flames and found himself facing a lifetime of matrimony for no more heinous offense than looping rolls of orange crepe-paper over a chandelier.

So I lived and thrived, on my forty dollars a month plus an occasional fee or a fiscal boost from Dad. Here at the Y., all of us had at least two of the three Bedouin requisites for happiness — plenty of fresh water, hot coffee and women; here room rent, for a double-bunk space the size of a large broom-closet was two and a half a week; plate lunches, with drink and dessert thrown in, were thirty cents; and on the counter at Cabell's dairy stand near the Palace Theater stood a ten-gallon steel amphora filled with free buttermilk.

Yes, so I plodded along and then in mid-July, after three months of practice, I finally obtained my first client. He was charged with D. and D., being drunk and disorderly, and after posting an attorney's bond for a ten dollar fee, I showed up later with him in the city court.

In that era, there was but one, rather than half a dozen such courts. This one, called the Corporation Court, was housed in a former fire-station, with the City Hall on one side and the Department of Health on the other. This last-named was a two-story fire-trap that had once been the Victorian mansion from which Colonel E. H. Green, old Hetty's son, used to issue in his Pope-Toledo with a car-full of fancy women.

The courtroom was presided over by Judge Bing Williams; it had a twenty-foot ceiling, and the warm, police-court smell was stirred about like swill by the lazy, clacking fans above our heads. The cases again were called in numerical order, and again you sat there hour after hour waiting for your turn, along with the yawning police officers just off their graveyard shifts.

Finally, my case was called; our plea was not guilty, and Frank Bryant the prosecutor waved the officer to the stand and began a bored routine direct-examination, both of them knowing the questions and answers by heart, Frank leading and the officer following, like a flute tracking the coloratura soprano. Having established the who, what, when and where, duly laying his predicate and qualifying his witness, rushing through the testimony like an enuretic priest ripping through a mass, Frank moved in easily for the kill.

"And what on this occasion, was the appearance and condition of the defendant?"

"He was weaving in his walk, his eyes were bloodshot, he talked thick-tongued, there was a strong odor of alcohol about his breath and on his person, and his clothing was disarranged," (meaning his pants were unbuttoned).

"In the course of your ten years' experience as a police officer, have you had occasion to observe many drunk persons?"

"Yes, sir."

"In your opinion, was this man drunk or sober?"

"Drunk, sir."

"Thank you, officer. No more questions. Your Honor."

My client leaned over, his breath again, or was it still, heavy with the Choicest Product of the Brewer's Art. "Lemme testify. I can bust this case wide open."

"Sure." I said, not asking what his defense might happen to be, but confident in the knowledge that God would protect his own, in this trial by alcohol.

The defendant, in sun-faded khakis, lumbered over and mounted the witness stand. After answering a few routine questions, he launched his defense.

"Well, Judge, tell you how it was. I had got up early to go down to the Market to get a load of oranges to take to East Texas: Well, you know how it is early like that, so I just went and had me six or eight bottles of beer as an eye-opener."

There was a pause; the courtroom rocked with laughter; and when it had died down, His Honor looked down at me with a dispassionate and pitying eye.

"Any more questions, counsel?"

"Uh, no, gosh, I guess not, Your Honor. Defense rests."

"Any cross-examination?"

"No. State rests." Frank was already shuffling through his papers, getting ready for the next case, and the officer was on his way out the side door.

"Both sides close?"

"Yes, Your Honor."

"Ten dollars and a motion." The judge also was looking down at his docket, and I slouched out into the street with my disconsolate client after he had laid ten dollars on the desk of Bolen Marquette, the court clerk.

A few months later, I happened to meet my client on the street.

"How you been?"

"Oh, good, I guess. I got in jail again, and this time my wife called Ivan Berwin."

"Well, well."

I knew Ivan fairly well; he was about my age, a plaintiff's attorney of credit and renown, and I felt my nose slipping out of joint from jealousy.

"How much did Old Ivan charge you?"

"Oh, it was twenty-five dollars, but it was worth it. He got me off,

without me having to go to court or anything."

"Oh, I see. Well, I'll be talkin' to you."

I was already picking up some of Tewk's free and easy lingo, if not his ability as an attorney, and I slunk on back to the office, feeling that Ivan had over-charged and conned his client, knowing by that time that he had merely paid the fine, which I also had learned by then, was ten to the peasant public but only half that to us members of the nobility. I did not see then as I did later, that Ivan had served his client better than I, had saved him a day's wages, had shielded him from public ridicule, and in the bargain had given him the assurance and cachet which come to all those who have a lawyer who "can get you out of anything."

— — —

"None of them knew the color of the sky."

In common with the luckless seamen in Stephen Crane's *The Open Boat*, I knew not the seasons nor their changes as the Summer, and then the Fall and Winter wore away, as I steered a triangular course between courthouse, the Y. and the City Hall, with occasional overnight visits to Amarillo to see Mother and Dad, and of course Melanie.

Then late in the Fall, for the first but by no means the last time, I began to sense the beat of powerful unseen wings overhead and to feel the magnetic obscene tug of Death at my sleeve. I would stand in the window of the office, wondering how long it would take to fall the fourteen stories below and whether I would wish myself back on the window ledge when I got halfway down; or at the Y., pace the dim-lit linoleum corridor late at night, gazing down at the rain-slick car tracks on Ervay Street, wondering, wondering — and then perhaps go back to the room to bring myself off with a copy of *Stocking Parade* or to read some more in my second-hand volumes, Pushkin or *The Tattler*, or perchance in *The Victorian Anthology* which I had heisted from the Missionary Society of the First Methodist Church.

For all that, I must have been making some headway, at the law anyway, for after ten months of practice, along in February 1936, I began renting, for thirty dollars a month, one of Tewk's vacant offices, and wrote to Dad that I wouldn't be needing any more Remittance-Man checks.

And then, five months later, after having been cooped up in Dallas for fifteen months, I got the wanderlust again and discovered urgent business in the Far West.

# # #

The little town of Strongbow lies deep in southern Arizona about fifty miles east of Tucson. This is Chiricahua Apache country, where Cochise and his scouts used to pick off the drivers on the Butterfield Stages like so many steel ducks in a shooting gallery. By 1936, with its cool high climate, it had settled down as a little ranch town and winter resort of no particular consequence, but to me at that time it shone from afar like a star over Bethlehem.

For I had begun to weary of Melanie and without doubt she of me. At any rate, when July came, I airily wrote her that I wouldn't be up to Amarillo for the two-weeks annual coffee-break which "everybody" in those days took. No, I wouldn't be coming to Amarillo at all; instead, I would be in Strongbow and, cruel-careless that I was, told her also that in Arizona I would be visiting Tangee Todhunter.

Tangee as I have said, I had known since my days as a dauntless young field-artilleryman, and now, driven as always by impulse I determined to see her once more.

Tangee was blonde and short-legged, possessed of a reedy plangent voice with husky overtones from the chain-smoking of Benson and Hedges cigarettes. She was of a restless romantic nature, a creature of mood and whim; from her Cupid's-bow lips I first heard of Miniver Cheevy, he who missed the high renown that made so many a name so fragrant, who mourned Romance, now on the town, and Art, a vagrant. Along with her taste for the poetry of E. A. Robinson, Tangee also had a keen appetite for such literary soufflés as the works of Thorne Smith and Christopher Morley; on one of the rare and hushed afternoons of my life, alone in her apartment we made, instead of love, chocolate nut fudge and read aloud from *Where the Blue Begins*.

Ivor her father was a genial, heavy-browed Bostonian who in spite of his M.I.T. laurels in engineering was chronically out of work, and who sat imperturbably reading and smoking the time away in their hot little apartment over on Jackson Street, while Mrs. Todhunter took in sewing for a living.

Tangee of course did not work any more than Ariel did, or Peter Pan; somewhere in the background hovered an indulgent and well-



heeled grandmother who bought her clothes and who paid her tuition at Fairbrook, a small expensive college just outside Denver. Without the literary devices of cliché and hyperbole, Tangee's chattering tongue would have been forever silent: Her companions at college ran invariably to wavy-haired Phi Deltas forever at the wheels of Packard phaetons, forever in the company of Chi O's possessed of the most LOVEly oval faces and the most GORgeous ivory complexions. She was in and out of our house at all hours; we had never known anyone like her, of the sub-species known to science as the Flamin' Mamie or the College Widow, and she held us with her glittering eye and long cigarette holder, babbling of things as remote to our experience as anything in the rain-forests of Brazil or the environs of Ulan Bator. Yes, she had heard the chimes at midnight, and we sat enchanted, while Rick mimicked her endlessly behind her back.

Over the years she and I had kept up a hit-and-miss correspondence full of airy trifles and scraps of poetry, and now in mid-July 1936, after she had long since moved to Arizona, she had invited me, or more likely *I* had invited me, to visit her; and so one sultry morning I climbed aboard the T. and P. day-coach and set out for Strongbow.

When morning came we were in El Paso, where I saw two-hundred-pound chunks of ice being loaded into bins underneath the Pullmans.

"What's that for?"

"Air-conditioning, for going through the desert."

"Well, I'll be damned."

An even more fascinating sight, as I strolled through the depot, was Aldous Huxley's latest novel, *Eyeless in Gaza*, for sale at the news stand. I mused on how intoxicating it must be to see your own creation on display, to scan its provocative dust-jacket and to fondle it in your arms, to run your fingers over the print, over the words, *your* words . . . All this, together with the thrill of seeing new country, and for all I could tell a new Tangee, put me into a rare state of excitement which continued until afternoon, when the train pulled to a halt at Benson. Tangee had driven up from Strongbow to meet me, and now in blue-flowered chiffon stood on the platform in the blinding desert sun, her chaff-colored hair blowing about her heavy-chinned features and her eyes crinkling with delight.

"*Loki!*"

She ran toward me and I dropped my suitcase and hugged her to me, although I probably smelled like a goat after my thirty-odd hours on the chair-car. She led me to the old blue Buick that I remembered from Amarillo days, and drove me home for a late lunch.

Her mother was there, still sweet-faced and chipper as ever although no longer tied to the sewing machine. Mr. Todhunter had a job now, which was what had brought them to Strongbow, supervising construction on a W.P.A. project nearby.

For the next few days Tangee and I loafed around town, swimming in the river, sun bathing, and reading poetry to each other. One afternoon, driving down through the San Pedro River Valley, the mountain desert scenery with the Whetstones on one side and the Dragoons on the other blue and romantic in the distance, we came to the old frontier town of Tombstone and walked into one of the saloons. Here, although Prohibition had been abolished for nearly three years, for the first time in my life I sat in a bar with a woman, ordering up mixed drinks and paying for them with a flourish. This was OK Corral Country, and the ghosts of the Clanton boys and of Doc Halliday, he who also had been a professional man, a dentist, back in Dallas, still haunted the streets. ("Whut did you say yore name was, stranger?" "Ah didn' say. Mostly, folks just calls me Ringo." [Sound of glasses being put down on the bar, of chairs being pushed back from tables.] )

Back in Strongbow, Tangee cagily arranged a visit to an aunt who lived in Flagstaff, about three hundred miles away, high in the mountains to the Northwest and almost up to the Grand Canyon. On our first night out we stayed with some friends of the family in Phoenix, friends who were courteous enough to sleep out on the porch in the oven-hot atmosphere, so as to let the both of us have the two bedrooms which were cave-cool from an evaporation machine which rattled away outside the window.

With all our running around, Tangee and I had never had sex, although there is the memory of a nude swimming party we once had on the Gordon-Cumming Ranch just outside Canyon, where she strutted about in the moonlight, stoned on bootleg hootch.

"See, I've got little-boy breasts, just like a little boy," she had crowed, both she and Mavis McLean walking about at the edge of the pool, comparing dimensions and trying to out-drink each other. Buzz Elder was along too, and on the way back to Amarillo, Tangee had got sick all over the inside of his car and although next day he and I scrubbed and scrubbed, the smell never came out, and finally he was forced to sell the car a few weeks later. At any rate we had taken Tangee home and I had carried her up to the living-room of her apartment, where the Murphy bed was already rolled out from the closet and awaiting her. I took her clothes off and got a nightie over her head, while the family's bulldog, who had never cared for me, sniffed around my ankles, growling, and Tangee's father from the next room awakened and called out, "Tigah, be quiet; do you

heah me, suh, be quiet, I say!"

Now in Phoenix, when everybody else was in bed, like Jurgen I decided to do the manly thing, and thereupon crept into Tangee's bedroom. I got into bed with her and all too soon had her nightie up over her hips and over those little-boy breasts. She spread her legs apart for me willingly enough, but for all that was not yet ready, and I was trembling and impatient, and got bruised and had to give it up, the both of us lying back panting and unsatisfied.

The next day at Flagstaff, where the air was thin and pure and the lavender mountains towered up around us, I registered us at the tourist court as Dr. and Mrs. Humphrey Clinker; here Tangee took a shower while I watched and then I took one while she watched, but the fire could not be rekindled, and we went into town for some pub-crawling and then dragged home to bed where we slept in each other's arms like Hansel and Gretel in the forest.

The next morning we tried love-making once more but with no luck at all, both our panics chasing each other around in a circle, and after a while we got up and dressed, paid a formal visit to Tangee's relatives and then took off for the long hot drive back to Strongbow.

Once arrived, "I guess I'll go on home," I said sorrowfully, "I've spent all my money," neglecting to add that my masculine ego had taken an even more severe beating than my pocketbook; so without too much ado, Tangee cranked the Buick up once more and drove me to Benson to catch the train for the East.

Late in September, Tangee wrote a long sad letter telling me how dark it was outside and how lonesome she was, and did we made a mistake in not running off to Tucson as we had talked about doing, and getting married. By that time she was teaching school in Tucson, but wrote that in October she planned to play hookey from a teachers' convention in Phoenix, and to come to Dallas instead.

In the middle of October then, I walked down to the Union Terminal and met her train. I had bespoken a room at the Mayfair, a decent enough hotel which stood at the corner of Ross and St. Paul, only three blocks from the Y. Having taken on worldly ways in the bars of Arizona, I had procured a bottle of red wine, and this we drank in the room as she bustled about, taking a shower and putting on a slip and fresh stockings. When the bottle was finished I undressed her and flipped back the covers of the bed, laid her upon it, and spreading and then mounting her, found both of us ready this time, and enjoyed a gorgeous full-blown orgasm, both of us sweating and straining together, riding it out to the finish.

During her two or three days' visit we had dinner with the Fox Mahaffeys. He had married his Kappa sweetheart, and, an organiza-

tion man to the core, had become a junior exec. with I.B.M. which had promptly sent him to Dallas. Here, Texas was celebrating her first one hundred years with a Centennial exposition, a five months' kermesse and cultural hoe-down which was installed at the State Fair grounds. Fox was in charge of his firm's exhibit, and I took Tangee out to meet him and to view the wonders on display. We wandered around the pavilions, drank ten-cent Pearl beer and munched Youngblood's fried chicken.

"This girl, Loki, she is all right," Fox said to me as we sauntered along, with the two girls chattering on up ahead. "she is all right — but she is not for you." a remark which astounded me but which I did not ask him to explain; and pretty soon we all left the grounds and he drove us back to town in his new Chevrolet.

On the last day of her visit, on an evening purple with woe, Tangee and I wandered around the fair grounds together. Late at night we stood in front of the State Fair Music Hall, near the Exposition Street gate, listening to the water as it trickled off the tits and between the heroic thighs of the allegorical bronze group which decorated the driveway. I had just blurted out the news, the terror rising in me like vomit, that I could not marry her, but that I couldn't say why because I didn't know, myself, and she looked over at the sign which hung on the fence nearby.

"'Exit' — that's meant for me!" she cried bitterly, and we walked through the turnstiles and caught the street-car back to town.

"It was like having a door slammed in your face," her mother wrote me later in the month, and I tore up the letter; but the one that Tangee had written in September, with its passion and longing and despair, I kept for many years.

# # #

One of Freud's *compadres*, a bone surgeon in Vienna, once stated that after God had finished with judging him on the day of the Last Trump, he intended to produce a cancerous femur and shake it in the Almighty's face:

"And now, what do you make of *this*, eh?"

In June of 1937, Rick had at last, after all his F's and stumblings, his failures and road-blocks, stood on the platform with the rest in robe and mortarboard to receive his M.D. diploma. While waiting for his internship in Kansas City, he had gone home to Amarillo and then, early in July, drifted on down to Dallas for a short visit with me.

I called a couple of girls, and we all made plans to go swimming out at Kidd Springs on the Fourth of July. I had been having a few pure non-committal dates with Genay Achenbach, a large-boned girl with bobbed chestnut hair and a delightfully sarcastic manner. Her father was a decent enough chap, a V.I.P. with Continental Oil Well Supply, and the family lived out in University Park not too far from the Dallas Country Club. A decent enough chap then, but one who tired eventually of providing a car for his daughter's dates with some broke lawyer who lived downtown at the Y. Now, when I phoned Genay, she guessed she would like to go swimming right enough, but added that her old man suggested this time I dip into my motor-pool rather than his for transport.

For all that, Rick and I coolly arrived a little after the noon hour, but with no more portage facilities than could be procured by six or eight Dallas Transit tokens strung together on a large safety pin.

"Oh well," sighed Genay, faced with the prospect of a long hot street-car ride into Oak Cliff, and promptly hit her father up once more for the loan of his automobile. We piled into the car and drove to Columbia Avenue in East Dallas, to pick up DeeDee Garrett.

DeeDee was a tall graceful Irish girl who, for all that she per-spired freely, always managed to smell somehow, like a spice cabinet; a lass with glossy black hair and a wide-eyed, sentimental approach to life, and one whom I always suspected of harboring a secret lust for the poetry of Laurence Hope and Ella Wheeler Wil-

cox. I had met her through Bo Adams, a fellow member of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, a jolly but sincere body which I had joined in the hope of genteelly soliciting some legal business, and for whose luncheons Mother had been providing me with seventy-five cents a week. ("Now you go to those meetings and get to know some of those up-and-coming young businessmen: *You'll see!*") At any rate, here now were Rick and I with Genay and DeeDee, and we all took off for Kidd Springs.

It was a wonderful sun-drenched day, one of those times which are placed in memory like a pearl on black velvet. We laughed and chattered, and Rick and I ran through all our old gags; we consumed nickel cokes and thick greasy hamburgers, we danced in the pavilion and swam in the cool brown water. Rick especially was happy, flushed with the triumph of his bitterly-earned degree and the prospect of entering into his life's work; none of us noticed then how his rib-cage showed through the skin above his bathing trunks, or that his eyes glittered rather than shone, and how often he stopped to rest after romping with DeeDee in the shallow water.

All too soon it was time to go home, and all too soon, a few days later, when Rick had gone back to Kansas City, came the letter — *letter*, mind you — from Dad, which enclosed the telegram.

"Rick ill, believed tuberculosis. Come at once," with Dad's pencilled note to me beneath it, "This looks serious."

By the time I got the letter, Dad was already at the bedside, going solemnly in, according to Mother's version of it, shaking hands with Rick, saying "How are you, son?" and then sitting down in a chair by the window, opening up a book and beginning to read.

There was an unreal, fitful, miasmic quality to the rest of that summer, lit by the heat-lightning of dread and hope. Rick's temperature went now up, now down, and he began the first of the moves which were to continue for years, from one hospital to another, to the family home in Amarillo, to the State sanitarium in West Texas, then back home again, and then finally — but we run ahead of our story.

All this was duly set down in Mother's diaries:

"Worried stiff . . . Petrified . . . Very blue, cried all night . . . My heart is about to break as I cannot get food adjusted so he does not throw up . . . Rick very blue. Has gone 64 days without pneumo, though."

These were my sentiments too, as I stood aghast before the eternal Problem of Evil, the riddle that had furrowed the brow of Job; it was Rick and not I who had led the blameless life — but it was Rick who was being put to the torture, and I felt like confronting God with this, his handiwork, flinging a collapsed and rotting lung

in His face and shouting for an explanation.

However, all my thoughts that summer were not filled with bitterness and terror; more and more they came to be of Orianne Martine. A year before, in June 1936, I had driven up to Denton to see Vilia Mae Grandison married, and on the trip back to Dallas, the bride's brother Dale had brought along one of his girl friends for a visit. She had arranged to stay in Dallas with a former college roommate, and I paid little attention to Dale's suggestion as he dropped me off at the Y., that the four of us might get together and have some fun.

The next day, Monday, found me at the office as usual by eight-thirty. By now, as I have mentioned before, I was very proud to have acquired my own private office. This I had furnished in high enough style with an office suite in walnut and brown leather which the building had acquired in lieu of rent from a former tenant and which I was allowed to use free. I had put up a couple of framed-at-home Japanese prints, having acquired a taste for them from Pirie McDonald (Photographer of Men), a friend of Morris Longstreth's whom I had met in New York six years before.

With these on the wall along with my framed diploma and my license to practice, I was pretty well set up, although when Tewk had any correspondence or pleadings to be done, I humbly took my place at the secretary's desk, hoping that nobody, especially no fellow counselor, would catch me at my belittling chores. I was also the official answering service; Tewk's office adjoined mine; we had, of course, only one line, with an extension, and when the call was for him, I would bang on the intervening gypsum-board partition, he would call back "O.K." and pick up the receiver.

"Are you Mr. Tay?"

I looked up to see a tall, square-rigged, titian-haired girl, hazel-eyed and with more freckles than you could ever hope to count, standing in the doorway and regarding me with a sprightly mischievous air.

"Well, yes, What can I do for you?"

I got up and went to her, shaking hands formally and motioning her to a chair.

"My name is Orianne Martine and I want to see you about getting a divorce."

Her voice was a pleasant contralto, and like Melanie's contained a shiver of excitement. She was in high heels and an apple-green cotton frock, and as she sat down before my desk, removed her white gloves and laid her purse on my desk. I was fishing around in the desk drawer for one of those long yellow ruled tablets which are a status symbol of the legal profession, when I noticed that my pro-

spective client was wearing no wedding ring and that she seemed to be enjoying some private joke of her own.

"But you're not married." I said, "not really." and she broke into a peal of laughter.

"No. Of course not. I'm Nancy Jo's friend: she's the girl Dale brought down from Denton yesterday."

My visitor darted out into the hallway and in a minute returned with Dale and Nancy Jo, all of them grinning like fools. After a little cute-collegiate conversation we went over to the second unit of the building for lunch at Chez Maurice. This cafe was one of the many posh downtown spots which had sprung up to harvest some of the Centennial tourist dollars and to give the Mural Room and the Golden Pheasant a run for their money. Dale, who had come to town like a country dude on Saturday night with tie, and starched white shirt with the cuffs turned halfway to the elbow, found a Gentleman Must Wear Coats sign staring at him, but a thoughtful management came up with a little over-sized number in black alpaca and we all went in to dine.

Orianne, it appeared, had just finished her junior year at Texas University in Austin, and was planning to go to Boulder, Colorado for summer school and then, later on, to the same place to finish out her senior year. She had spent her first two years at S.M.U. and had gone to college, cafeteria-style, picking up courses here and there in art, journalism and architecture, but without much thought of a degree. None of that seemed to matter much; her father owned the Martine Music Company over on Elm Street near Whittle's and the Baldwin agency, and she had been reared in an atmosphere of music and art, and in association with most of the local culture-vultures.

We two happy amateurs got along well from the start, and she and I rattled on, each trying to impress the other, and both of us understanding at least half of what we were saying. She played the piano, but no better, I gathered, than I played the violin; knew that Manet was not merely a mis-spelling of Monet; and was a pretty fair hand at pronouncing Debussy and Mozart.

After that day, we had a few lunch dates, and then later in the summer I went down to the Union Terminal to see her off for Colorado.

"Take good care of her, she's all I've got," I said to the porter in jest, tipping him fifty cents with a baronial gesture, that sum being the largest gratuity I had showered on anyone up to that time. Her brother Albert, a man of twenty-five or so, shaggy-browed and built like a bear, had brought her to the train. He shook hands with a knuckle-popping grip, said, "Howdy" and looked me over with a



speculative, suspicious air.

For all that, "Albert was tremendously impressed," Orianne told me later, "to see me in the company of a sophisticated older man."

After the train pulled out, he and I walked up the ramp to the street level and parted with a stiff wary handshake and a fair imitation of sincerity to our pleased-to-have-met-you's. I walked back to the office, and with the exception of a date or so at Christmas time and two or three letters, pretty much forgot about Orianne Martine for the next twelve months.

In the ensuing time, the Winter of 1936 and the following Spring, for me there was the matter of Sophia Trotter.

Sophia, who was plain of face, shy of manner and built on the lines of an ocean-going tug, for all that had a wonderful bubbly sense of humor, and I had grown very fond of her after our meeting in Nate Burrows' Sunday School class. This convocation of the white-collared faithful was a well known feature of the First Methodist Church, an institution which I had joined as a tactic in my frontal assault on the towers of respectability.

I had a few dates with Sophia in the Winter of 1936 and late into the Spring of the following year. One evening in April, coming into the Y.M.C.A. lobby and picking up my mail at the desk, I found a letter from my Amarillo sweetheart, Melanie Rambo.

"Well, Loki, Jim Bob and I have decided to go ahead with our plans, and to take the fatal step in June. I don't imagine this comes as much of a surprise to you, but I hope we can always be friends": and I went upstairs to brood the evening away. I suspect that it was on the rebound from this, smarting from a rejection which I had done everything to encourage, one night soon after, I asked Sophia to marry me.

"Oh, yes. Yes, indeed."

I was seated at her feet, in the parlor of her roomy old house near the car barns at Elm and Haskell, and as she leaned over me, I kissed her honest trusting face.

From then on, we continued to see each other several times a week, going to Sunday School meetings and picnics, and holding hands at the Beacon, a neighborhood movie house on Columbia Avenue. She had no other social life; she was a dental assistant at Baylor Hospital, her father was busy most of the time with the laundry which he owned in Oak Lawn, and her mother was off somewhere dying of cancer.

All this was in the Spring, and then one afternoon early in June when I was at Sophia's, washing and polishing her car in the back yard, I was called to the phone. It was Orianne on the line, which meant, of course, that I had left Sophia's number with her. When I

came back out into the yard. "Who was that?" asked Sophia, her eyes wide with wonder and dismay.

"Oh, — nobody —"; and I went back to my Simonizing, but a week or so later I told Sophia that I could not marry her and that, as in the case of Tangee, I did not know and so could not tell the reason, why.

"By the way," I asked her, "have you told anybody that we were getting married?"

"Yes. My best friend, Lucretia."

"Oh, God."

"Well, I guess a girl's got a right to tell her best friend that she's engaged to be married."

"Yeah. I guess so. Well, good bye," and I cantered out of her life with nary a look behind. Not that I was engaged instead to Orianne, but by this time she and I had drifted together like two boats caught in a maelstrom.

There is a calm stretch of water below the Dallas Country Club dam on Beverly Drive, all along Lakeside which is a street of calm aloof elegance, where the suave Cadillac-flanked mansions of the well-to-do stand on pleasant terraces above the water. It is a great place for ducks and children on balmy Sunday afternoons, and as it proved, an excellent place to catch a husband — or, so far as that goes, a wife. The balustrades and Mediterranean tiles of Rose Lloyd's manor-house towered above the hackberries across the way, set in the midst of a multi-acred park of impeccable landscaping, and down at the water's edge, by the lower dam, hidden in the rushes like the cradle of baby Moses, was a canoe belonging to the Martines. It was an Old Town, as sturdily ribbed as a whaleboat, with well weathered canvas sides, still dry or reasonably so, and lacking only a little attention in dry dock to be completely seaworthy.

One fine summer's eve I had come out to the Martine's house on Swarthmore Street, and Orianne and I had walked the few blocks over to Lakeside, toting a picnic basket and a very moral phonograph, one which demanded that every three minutes or so you get up to change the record.

We bandied small talk back and forth like ping-pong balls, as she sauntered along beside me in scruffy low-cut tennis shoes and a yellow house dress with a hemline halfway between knee and ankle. The summer sun had brought her freckles out like stars on a frosty night, and she seemed happy and confident as she guided me down to the water's edge, across the lower dam and over to the hiding place of the canoe.

"Here, that front seat has got knocked loose," she said, and

snatching up a hammer and some nails from the picnic basket, charged into the bow of the canoe; and I, who had been up to now merely amused and tolerant, felt my heart go out to her as it had to Melanie coming down the walk toward me in the snow.

Later, we munched chicken-salad sandwiches and sipped iced tea, drifting over the still, dark water, and cranking up the phonograph, played Tchaikovsky's *First Piano Concerto*.

"I'd always get this out and play it down at S.R.D. on a Saturday night, when Lucy Agnew, Jeanette Evans and all the other *popular* girls would be out on dates and I'd be alone in the dormitory. I'd buy a quart of vanilla ice cream and play this, sitting on the bed, eating the ice cream and crying."

I was in the stern, listlessly paddling and she lounged up against me, seated on the floorboards of the canoe. We had been indulging in a little genteel if somewhat precarious necking, and now she drew my face down to her and kissed me.

"I've never been out with anybody that I felt I could kiss whenever I wanted to, who wouldn't try to take advantage of it," she said.

This confidence, usually reposed in me by mothers whose daughters were busy in the hay with less scrupulous but more enterprising fellows than I, was received by me with mixed emotions.

"Yeah, sure," I said, and kissed her some more, and pretty soon we stashed the canoe away and walked back to the house.

From then on we went back time and again to Lakeside, "We'll just have a summer romance," I said airily and with a total ignorance of the days to come, "just see each other occasionally, and then in the Fall when the geese are flying, when it gets cold and we have to move inside, we'll call the whole thing off."

By early Fall however, I had moved out of the Y. and into the home of Maxie Korn. Maxie was a reformed Jew, and his family enjoyed good Gentile cooking and loud happy table-talk. They all lived on Abbott Street near Lexington, within easy walking distance of the Martine's home. Orianne, who had finished her four years of college but without qualifying for a degree, was working in the stationery department at Neiman's, and we often met downtown for lunch. Pretty soon I started riding home with her and her father after work, they would drop me off at the Korns, and then after dinner I would mosey over to Swarthmore Street to spend the evening.

By this time it was too chilly for canoeing, and anyway, the faithful Old Town, its mission accomplished, had either been stolen or had gone to its Long Home in the highly prestigious mud of upper Turtle Creek.

Now, Orianne and I strolled around Highland Park or on occasion borrowed the family Buick, a four-door sedan of the most towering respectability, of a midnight blue color and as far as we were ever concerned of unsullied upholstery. This was Mrs. Martine's conveyance to operas and concerts, to bridge games and teas, while Mr. Martine drove a 1936 gray Ford sedan. I was duly impressed by all this, although I did not know that the Ford was a company car, and was naively unaware of the phrase "expense-account aristocracy."

In the Buick, on the evenings when we could borrow it, we would drive around town, usually winding up parked on Airline Road near Northwest Highway. Here, close to Pat Henry's Christian church and the Hillcrest Mausoleum, in a neighborhood given over to the brick cottages of University Park gentility, we were on the very outer rim of felicity, and here Orianne avid for affection, snuggled her broad shoulders into my arms and turned up her wistful face to be kissed.

For hours we chattered about college life, and art and love and music, pausing now and then for a little smooching which would not have brought a blush to the cheeks of a Mother Superior.

Then, one clear evening, with the leaves turning gold and scarlet in the treetops, we came up the terrace to her house, a stucco cottage near St. John's Drive. We sauntered up the concrete steps, and the scent of burning oak logs was in my nostrils, a nostalgic scent which I had come to associate with the Martines and their home and fine living, and I sniffed the pungent air and heard the wild geese honking overhead, and Orianne and I looked at each other and laughed.

"It's the end of summer," we said, and went on in the house.

Not too long after that, the fatal pronoun "we" began replacing "I" in my conversation. "When we —," I would say, and then one night, using that phrase and seated on the big comfortable kidney-shaped sofa in front of the fire, "Do you mean you want to marry me?" asked Orianne and I said well, yes, that I guessed that was what I meant, but thinking all the time, "Someday, but only after I've got rid of all my troubles —," meaning Rick's t.b., and the stumbling around trying to get ahead at the law, and the almost constant distress in the gut which no amount of bland diets or doctoring seemed to help.

Orianne had been brought up in a benevolent despotism where character was more valued than caring, and standards more than sympathy. "Put it where it shows, dearie," she had been told, on reproaching her mother for wearing a ragged chemise underneath a new silk dress; and on her twelfth birthday, she had been given a

dollar by her father for memorizing Rudyard Kipling's "If." She considered that she had pretty well lost her life-long battle with her brother Albert for her parents' approval, and had a recurrent fantasy that she had been invited to a party where she was forced to sit with strangers, while off in the distance there was gay laughter, the popping of champagne corks and a brave show of streamers and paper hats. For all her good bones and model's figure, she was still ungainly and unsure of herself.

"Ori, you've got a lot of personality, but you'll never be beautiful," her mother had told her, "and if you can't get a man by the time you're twenty-five, you can move to New York, go on with your art and become a bachelor girl."

Her father hailed from Linetown in East Texas, and was a soft-spoken, sentimental man with an intellectual bent, one who was devoted to his life's work of running one of the largest music stores in town and who was by temperament a diplomat rather than a gut-fighter.

"When I was a kid at school," he once confided to me, "and the bully would offer to beat me up, I could always talk him out of it."

Orianne had been named after her mother, just as Albert had been named for his father. Orianne Sr. and her forbears had come from cold hard country, from North Dakota, and before that, from the Yukon Territory. She had in her something windswept, humorless and austere, for all her artistry in music. Now, when I met her, she was always gracious to me, and I understood that she had given up a promising career at the piano and as church organist to become a circuit-rider of bridge parties, teas, symphony concerts, and first-night openings at the Little Theatre. She was a traveler, one who went to Europe every summer, who kept a trunk stored in the basement of the Paris Ritz, and who, as a formidable monologist, kept me enthralled by the hour with tales of adventure in exotic lands.

I loved her then, for the dangers she had passed, and she loved me that I did pity them — the lost luggage in Edinburgh, the insolent concierge in Cannes, the purloined bathing cap at Eden Roc, the ill-tempered maître d' at Maxim's, the theater-ticket brouhaha in New York.

She had been active in the Dallas Little Theatre, which by the late Thirties was headed for oblivion but which was still warm with memories of the old days, when Charles Meredith was director and John William Rogers resident playwright, when such young bucks as Bill Lipscomb and True Thompson were leading-men, and such belles as Irma Mangold and Ludi Mae Sensabaugh were leading-women.

Yes, the Martines were Up There all right, and I burned to be Up There with them. As I walked back to my lodgings on moonlit nights, seeing the branches of the pecan trees stark against the sky, I fantasied myself at candle-lit dinners, surrounded by exotic, perfumed women.

"Those far-renowned brides of ancient song/ Peopled the hollow dark like burning stars." Fans fluttered, and heads bent low to catch the nuances of my brilliant Wildean table-talk:

"After all, woman, in the last analysis, —" I would murmur, launching the first clause of a winged apophthegm, and so I sauntered along, dreaming my way through a world of *thé dansants*, chiffon and spike-heels.

With all that in the background, one chilly day in November, Orianne informed me that her mother wanted to give a party in her honor the following month.

"It'll be on December 30th," she gushed, "Mother's giving it instead of bringing me out as a deb, which we really can't afford. All Mother's and Daddy's friends will be there — they'll have champagne — and listen, there'll be two parties, an afternoon tea — Mother will announce the engagement then — later, at six o'clock we'll get married, and then announce *that*, at the dinner party in the evening." I sat stunned while she rattled on. "And you know, about a ring — well, don't worry about *that*. Grandmother Martine, that's Daddy's mother out in Salt Lake City, has given me a brooch," — she pronounced it "broach," and I had the vision of somebody turning the spigot on a freshly opened keg of nutbrown ale, "a brooch, and we can have the diamond from it set into a ring."

And so it was that next day, I sat down with Dave Dove, another light-pursed young barrister who officed with old Judge Drewford down on the eleventh floor. Dave was newly come to matrimony, and with a mixture of pride and apprehension I sought his advice. Could a man hope to get by on a hundred-twenty-five a month (there was of course, no thought of Orianne's continuing to work).

"Nothing to it, Loki," said Dave with the air of a swimmer who urges you to abandon your happy footing on the bank above and to join him in the swirling icy current below. "There's nothing to it. You just learn to get by, that's all. And by the way, there's a wholesale jeweler right here in the building that'll treat you right on that ring — he fixed Dolly and me up with one for practically nothing." God, I thought, and went downstairs to arrange for the ring.

Shortly after this, I got a call from a woman who identified herself innocently enough as a worker for some credit association. Had I bought anything on time; did I own any real property; did I drive an automobile; what was my monthly salary, if I didn't mind telling

her; what stocks or securities did I own, and so on. All this seemed passing strange; but I answered the questions willingly enough, and only later did it dawn on me that my prospective father-in-law was checking up.

Tewk Jackson's comment when I broke the news to him, was characteristic of his disparaging sarcastic nature and sour-pickle attitude toward life.

"Well, that's the usual thing, for a broke lawyer to marry a rich girl," a comment which was echoed by my father a little later in the month in Amarillo.

So the date was set, and the ring was bought, and the week before Christmas I set out for Amarillo and stayed a week, for reasons which seemed valid enough at the time but which must have struck both my fiancée and my prospective in-laws as very odd indeed. Rick was home then, lying pale and thin in the upper room, and Grampie and Aunt Mae were there also and had been for the past year. Yes, in the midst of all the pain and sorrow, my grandfather and his fourth wife stayed on, and this is as good a place as any to rattle the bones of the Tay family skeleton:

"\$2,500.00 Houlton, Me. Dec. 30, 1929.

Six months after date we promise to pay to the order of C. H. Franey Twenty five hundred Dollars at the First National Bank. Value received. With interest at six per cent per annum until paid. (Signed), H. H. Tay Mrs. H. H. Tay."

On the back of the note appeared, later on, the entries of paid instalments — fifty dollars here and twenty-five there — totalling four hundred and twenty-five dollars, together with the bitter, scrawled comment of the payee:

"This is all that you paid that wich lived off is what I kept credding to you that was never actuluy paid and I recorred the interest for the eight years on \$2075.00 and it amounted to over \$900.00 more so you got a good trade on this deal.

C. H. Franey.

Bal. due around \$2700.00"

Mother, of course, was not at a loss for a high-minded mystique and rationale with which to ease her conscience at this bit of inter-necine chicanery. First of all, as I have heard her say, "If I paid him back, he'd only blow it on the Bramleys" (his wife's relations); and then, as Manon told me in recent years, "Mother always said that her father had lavished all his money on his two sons, and had given her only ailing step-mothers to take care of"; and now, in 1937, to make the best of his bad bargain, Grampie was taking it out in trade, by boarding and rooming at 1310 Madison.

This was a sordid transaction on both sides, and must have galled my father's flanks full sore, to be dunned by his father-in-law and to know that he himself was not man enough to stand up to his wife and to send the money along anyhow in spite of all hell.

I knew little and cared less for all that, of course, as, in a state of euphoria which bordered on the manic (apparently my old fears at the thought of approaching matrimony had disappeared for good) I loafed around the house, tried to keep Rick cheered up and chauffeured him and Mother around town. Dad took me to the train on Christmas night after a heart-breaking farewell from Rick. ("Good-bye, Joe"; "Well, all right — Gus — take it easy.") On the platform, Dad got off his crack about my marrying money and then softened it a little by slipping me a check for two hundred dollars, saying as he did so, "I only wish it were a thousand"; and I thanked him and then boarded the chair-car and fell asleep to the pounding of the wheels underneath my head.

Looking back on it now, it has occurred to me that if either Tewk or my father had taken the trouble to look further they would have seen that I really cared little for wealth but rather for status, and this rather than money, the Martines had in great plenty. The fact that my lust for status was of a peculiar twisted nature, one which involved merely Being instead of either Doing or Becoming, escaped everyone else as well as me; and at what peril I had this passionate longing, and to what grief it was to bring me in later years, I was in carefree ignorance.

Certainly, long before, in Amarillo, I had shown no great interest in Tricia Deibenkorn, a girl whose family lived up the street from us and with whom I had gone on a few dates. Both Dad and I had heard with more amusement than fascination that Mrs. Deibenkorn had coyly confided to our mutual friend Mrs. F. M. Leconte, "I suppose you know, Mr. Deibenkorn has just become a millionaire," an aside which one would expect to find only in the novels of someone like Sinclair Lewis. Then too, I could have married Sophia Trotter, the only child of a prosperous, infatuated father, or in all probability, once I had purchased some sort of motor vehicle, the well-to-do Genay Achenbach.

And then Orianne, like me, was arty rather than artistic, was witty and liked a good gag, and in addition, perhaps secretly yearned to be a man in about the same way that I secretly yearned to be a woman. Then finally, she was beautiful in her own wistful if wide-shouldered way, and I had strong sexual feelings about her. Kissing her once in the office, I noticed that she started away from me and then stared into my eyes with new interest; after we were married, she confided that she had felt for the first time "Just what happens



when a man gets excited," and although I did not love her with the corrosive passion which I had felt for Mavis McLean, still I was deeply fond of her, and perhaps most of all, what I cared for in her was her need for me. So, on balance, you might say that, with my mother's most precious heritage, a loving and accepting heart, the Stekels in me won out over the striving Franey's after all.

# # #

It was a fine sailboat, on the order of a Lake Scout or one of Van Ruysdael's fishing smacks, sloop-rigged and heavy in the beam, and constructed of good honest planking and white canvas. It was moored at White Rock Lake, a shallow oblong body of water which nestled in the hills beyond Lakewood Addition in the northeast part of town.

I had been at the lake before, having walked around its fourteen miles of shoreline one lonely Sunday while I was living at the Y., but I had never been on a sailboat before nor had I known anybody who owned one. This craft was the property of Dag Hydell, Dag with his white yachting cap, Trixie his delightfully giddy young wife, and his Packard sedan. The only man I knew who afforded tailor-made suits, Dag kept a cavernous cedar-closet full of them, the suave creations of Ed Tankus, and there they hung, the old with the new, rank on rank, decade on decade, until the day he died. Dag was broad-shouldered and handsome in a Diamond-Jim-Brady, expansive sort of way, a man of deep and ready laughter, the type who would have been known amongst the Bedouins as a great coffee sheik. In his madcap youth he had dabbled in Little Theatre matters, and now, with good things going for him as a cotton broker, he was keeping up the payments on a little Williamsburg cottage over on St. Andrews Drive.

The Hydells, along with Orianne and me, were members of what we termed the Gang. In this, there were four or five couples, all of us fresh turnouts to matrimony, the men older than the women, and all with the exception of Dag, still wearing some of the clothes that our fathers had bought for us in college. We men had all married women who were in their early twenties, who were younger and more "social" than we, gently reared Southern girls just out of school and at such a time, probably most of them still virgins. We all had about the same life-style, the men white-collar strivers, the women, loyal and stout-hearted, interested in art and music and in recipes that utilized the cheaper cuts of meat.

We were, variously, an attorney and a psychiatrist, a former artist who had turned to selling billboard advertising, an insurance peddler, and a cinema booker for Karl Hoblitzelle down at Interstate.

With the exception of Dag the Big Thinker, none of us had any money; like Hamlet, we ate the air, promise-crammed; unlike him, we lived in thirty-dollar-a-month apartments, held canasta parties, played dominos and croquet, and refinished our own furniture. Our drinks were iced tea, coffee or hot cocoa, except for those rare celebrations when somebody would put out a dollar for a little Stone Fort wine, a libation which came in gallon jugs and which possessed the flavor and bouquet of red ink fortified with grain alcohol.

Our insurance policies had yet to become "programs" and our securities "portfolios"; and the phrase, "Yes sir, this town's been good to me," was foreign to our tongues. None of the girls "worked," but rather stayed at home and economized, made their own clothes and prepared left-overs for dinner. On fine nights, totting baskets of sandwiches and deviled eggs they went out to the lake early with Trixie, and the men came out later and waved them ashore at the dock. It was a great lake for developing your sailing skill, with its whimsical moody winds and sudden calms, but I, who knew not jib from tiller, took no interest in the art and lolled in the stern or sat near the bow with bare feet dangling into the gurgly water, musing at the car lights and the fireflies in the pecan groves which lined the shore.

Our talk was punctuated with the daring use of words like "screw" and "bingies," and the girls squealed happily at Jed Turnbull's naughty riddles and limericks:

"What's the difference between a rooster and lawyer?"

"I don't know."

"Well, a rooster clucks defiance."

Or,

"'Twas a landlady from Cape Cod

Who once became pregnant, by God.

But 'twasn't the Almighty

Who lifted her nightie —

'Twas a lodger named Rodger, the clod."

Along with all that, like story-tellers in Baghdad reciting *The Thousand and One Nights*, we recounted incidents from our so recent courtships, weddings and honeymoons, and in the course of this, Orianne and I told them all about ours.

Our wedding had gone off well enough, considering the fact that since Mother and Dad felt they could not leave Rick in Amarillo, Orianne decided that her parents shouldn't be allowed to attend, either. We were married then, in the study of Bishop Harry Door who lived at Princeton and St. John, just a few blocks away from the bride's parents, with Albert giving the bride away and with Dale Grandison as best man. All of us returned to the Martine's home to

find a dinner party in progress and the bride and groom the object of congratulation from twenty or thirty guests.

My new father-in-law, who for years, or for nine months at least, lived under the suspicion that this was a forced marriage, put as good a face on the matter as he could, and duly presented me with the keys to a shiny new Plymouth sedan. (One recalls Lizzie Mearney and the two big black milk cows which she brought to Charles Franey's second marriage.)

"Take good care of her, son," he said, and I interrupted him with a mumbled, "Well, gosh, yes sir, I'll try to be a good husband"; "— and change the oil every thousand miles," he concluded, each of us misunderstanding the other like two characters in a Goldsmith play.

Pretty soon Orianne re-appeared, having changed, according to the item next day in *The Dallas Morning News*, from a white chiffon ball gown (borrowed from her mother), into "a black taitleur with matching accessories and a shoulder bouquet of orchids." To the popping of champagne corks and flash bulbs, I got some luggage into the trunk of the car, and with rice still clinging to my lapels and the bride awash in Chanel No. 5 splashed on by hystipsical bridesmaids, backed the tidy little blue wonder out of the driveway, stalling it only once or twice in the process, and so embarked finally upon my married life.

We were headed for the cabin in Colorado, a domicile which had been transmuted by my mother-in-law's press release into "The Tay family lodge," and now, free of town at last, we set out along the dark highway at the prescribed break-in speed of thirty-five miles an hour. Being some six weeks on the tender side of thirty, I was of course a stranger to such worldly amenities as hotel reservations, and so we wound up, exhausted, around midnight in a two-and-a-half dollar, hot-pillow motel in Bowie, Texas, ninety miles to the Northwest of Dallas.

I asserted my newly-acquired male prerogative by charging into the bathroom first, and soon emerged in crackling-new pajamas, to loll back like a sultan on the love-battered mattress and await the coming of the bride. She emerged finally in black teddies (beneath what waning moon and in what perilous Kansas pasture had I last seen teddies like those?), and I called out, not so much from the depths of experience as from hours spent in reading John O'Hara and Michael Arlen, "Why is it that all red-headed women wear black underwear?" and tremendously impressed with the groom's urbanity, the bride crept into bed and snuggled into my arms.

Well, it had been a long hard day, and in spite of my past ventures I was to all intents as virgin as the bride, and it was Arizona all over again. After a little embarrassed, dry-lipped kissing, I

slipped off the black lacy garment and tried to perform, but again, found only a tense and arid welcome, and soon we both fell asleep exhausted, after hugging and kissing each other perfunctorily like two mechanical dolls.

The next night, at the Herring Hotel in Amarillo, we did not even try to do better, and then, after a long breakfast with the family on Madison Street, we drove north through the chilly treeless plains, past Dalhart and up into Raton Pass, finally crunching to a halt at Walsenburg, Colorado, in streets packed with snow and odorous with the biting, nostalgic scent of coal-smoke.

In this little mining town, at an old-fashioned depot hotel, in a high-ceilinged room with a curlicued white iron bedstead, and after a hot communal Japanese-style bath, after chasing each other around the darkened room on our hands and knees, we got into bed, and, relaxed and happy for the first time, I caressed the lovely handsfull of breasts and ran my fingers through the gorgeous flaming thatch of pubic hair. When our wedding day was only a week or so distant, Orianne had let me kiss her breasts in the dimness of the parked car, ("Here, we're engaged now, and everything's all right") but this was something yet again, and now, in the hotel room, stroking her breasts in mounting passion and then letting her fondle me for a little while, finally, with everything moist and warm and agape for love, I entered her and with her felt, for the first of so many thousands of times, the ecstatic groan-and-strain of love-making and the final gasp, the little-death, truly, of a beautiful, long-overdue orgasm.

We had put the first black bean into the jar. "If you put one black bean into a jar for every time you do it the first year, and then take one out for every time that you do it after that," Dave Dove had confided to me once, "they say you'll never get all the beans out of that jar."

Well, as to that we should see; meanwhile, next day, we drove to Pueblo, seeing the frosted cake-icing on the Spanish Peaks to our left, then to Colorado Springs, and late that night, through Ute Pass, finally to Woodland Park.

"Get those suitcases out of the trunk, and be careful, don't drop them on this ice."

We had parked on the side of the hill in front of the cabin, and my lovely bride of three days was barking out orders like the sergeant of a close-order drill squad, and I barked right back at her, and then we both stopped and stared at each other. The high altitude and the strain of the trip had made us snappish, but then pretty soon we began to laugh, and I went on with the work of opening up the cabin, unlocking the padlock on the door and

climbing up on the roof to take the coverings off both chimneys so we could build a fire and then bed down for the night.

In her girlish fancies, Orianne had often seen herself in a cushioned love-nook placed midway up some winding, romantic castle stairway; here in the cabin, she swept regally about in the beautiful quilted dressing gown which she had bought out of her wages at Neiman's, unmindful of the ashes, soot and gravel which lay thick on the splintered floors. The spaces between the logs were unchinked, the cabin being built for summer use only, but we manfully stuffed old blankets into the worst of the cracks and I sharpened the ax, split wood and kept the fires going.

"A man who chops wood like a Canadian," wrote the bemused bride to her mother, meanwhile learning the joys and sorrows of cooking with indifferent utensils over a pine-knot fire.

Almost every day we went into Colorado Springs, where the Broadmoor had just opened its new rink, to go ice-skating, wobbling around under the influence of weak ankles, new love and the Manhattans which we gulped at the bar. In the evenings, I read to her by lamplight, for some reason choosing, among others, "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," and then after the bath water had got hot in the old zinc washtub we moved it in front of the fire, and, stripping to the buff, gave each other a bath. After patting each other lovingly dry we would creep into the billowy feather bed and make love, with the firelight dancing on the red boards of the ceiling (those black beans, again and again), and then fall asleep, with the big civet-cat coat across our feet, close and love-scented, fast in each others' arms.

Both here and in the Springs, the ghosts of Jordanne SeEVERS, of Charlotte and of Sid Kross haunted me, and I enjoyed the good side of the delicious schizophrenia of him who has never been able to decide whether he is existing in or outside of, the world of fiction.

Sometimes we made love in the afternoon, Orianne draping the windows in old quilts left over from the days of Grammie Spencer, lighting a fire of pine cones in the fireplace, slipping out of her clothes and into the black teddies, and then, when I followed her into bed, whispering, "What made you think I wanted to make love?"

It was a nostalgic setting for my bride also, being reminiscent of Boulder, where she had found that she could flower out and be herself for the first time, far removed from the powerful lunar drag of Dallas.

Here, her flair for ingenuity and for making things work had a free hand, and I was happy to see her revelling in it. I was delighted also to see that she was frugal and wise in the uses of money, although I was astounded to hear her say that she always felt that she

had never had enough pineapple juice, and to see her burst into tears when I bought her a two-quart can of the sweet liquid gold for her very own.

Then finally, as all honeymoons must, ours too came to an end. We had spent all our money, the entire hundred and fifty dollars which represented all my savings from nearly three years' practice at the law, but Aunt Merrie Spencer had given us seven dollars and a half to buy a silver spoon in our Candlelight pattern. With this sum in hand, on our last day, after boarding up the cabin and turning off the water, we pulled up at the Conoco station in Woodland Park, beneath the old red-rusty gasoline pump with the glass graduated-cylinder tank, and with a carefree air ordered them to fill 'er up for the trip back home.

We stayed in Amarillo a day or so, long enough for Aunt Mae to smell cigarettes on Orianne's breath and to say, "You *smoke*, don't you?" and for Dad to buy me a double-breasted dark-blue suit at Myah-an'-Myah, as we called it.

"Mistah Tay, you're a lucky man," said the elder Meyer, bustling about me with yellow tape measure and tailor's chalk, and speaking in his nasal, Weber-and-Fields accent, "yes sir, I'm tallink you, a lucky man — you've got a new zoot and new vife," and Dad and I glanced at each other in the mirror, both of us knowing that we would repeat it to Rick for him to bring off better than we ever could, and also, glancing there, I noticed for the first time that my father was shorter than I was. Shorter, and looking weary and baggy-eyed, standing there in his rumpled suit, for all the fresh white shirt and neat tie, weighed down with sorrow by Rick's terrible plight, but now, trying to be cheerful with our little in-joke and the purchase of the new suit for his son the bridegroom.

With all that, and some more visiting with the family, one day near the middle of the month, Orianne and I packed up and drove out of town into the chilly Panhandle sunrise, and headed for Dallas.

Our car had long since passed the prescribed thousand-mile break-in point, and anxious to begin our new life, we fled past the telephone poles at a speed that at times approached fifty miles an hour. Once arrived, we moved into the Martines' home for a week or so, to hold down the furniture while they were away on a trip, and then, after managing an apartment house for two or three months in exchange for free rent, hand-carried our belongings from a Martine Music Company van into a shotgun duplex on Blackburn Street.

This was in North Dallas, only a couple of miles or so from downtown, in a good solid middle-class neighborhood, although

Turtle Creek was just a BB rifle shot away. It was an unfurnished, one-bedroom apartment at thirty dollars a month, all bills paid, and no deposit. Out of my two hundred dollar grub-stake from Dad, we bought a comfortable livingroom suite from a Ross Avenue second-hand store and a diningroom table and chairs in unfinished white pine from Sears Roebuck.

From the Martine family in Linetown we had a Wilson portable sewing machine, and with this, using a chartreuse and lime-green color scheme borrowed from her friend Winnie Rawther, Orianne set out to make her own slip covers while I sanded and put white enamel on the diningroom furniture.

For the first week or so I grandiloquently took the family car to town, but found that this was a crime which in the eyes of the womenfolk of the Gang, Orianna included, ranked right up there with child-molesting and wife-beating. All of us, not excepting even Dag the Magnificent, lived as one-car families, and the men rode the street cars to work or were chauffeured about town by their wives. This was a custom much hallowed by tradition; in an earlier day, according to the memoirs of Publisher Ted Dealey,

“Ladies whose husbands worked downtown put on their pretty dresses, hats, veils and gloves, and with a pretty parasol to keep the sun off, stepped into their Victorias to be driven to town to bring their husbands home.”

Now, early in 1938, I meekly gave in and once more found myself astride my old steed, the Highland Park street car which had taken on its more affluent human freight a mile or so upstream and by now was scooping up the more plebian traffic of Cole and McKinney Avenues. I had little use for a car anyhow, and I could ride the street car for less than it cost to park the Plymouth; the going rate for day-long parking was fifteen cents, although if you didn't mind walking a few blocks, you could find plenty of places that charged only ten.

Then too, on the street car I could read, and this I did to my vast enjoyment, taking on as the years rolled by such formidable works as Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Symons' *Renaissance in Italy* and Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. Reading continued to be my major recreation, and once again seated on the hard yellow wooden seats, I lost myself in the pages of print, unmindful of the buzz of conversation, the hot summer winds blowing in through the open window and the clank and rumble of iron wheels on the track below.

Orianne was happy, for the first time being in charge of her own cozy little operation, watching our cat and kittens scamper up and down the concrete walk, repairing our aging second-hand appli-



ances, making her own clothes, and fashioning headgear out of hat bodies and scraps of ribbon purchased from Milliners' Supply.

Every Sunday we had a solemn and respectful meal with the Martins, followed oftentimes, until Mrs. Martine put a stop to it, by the new bride's foraging for plunder in the attic. "Despoiling the Egyptians," my father used to call this practice of married daughters the world over, when Mother would return to Topeka laden with junk-loot from a raid on Grampie Franey's home in Monticello.

My bride made a half-hearted attempt to keep up with some of her old friends from high school or college, but mostly ran with the Gang, and here our life, as I have indicated, had about it an idyllic pastoral quality; but every Eden has its snake, and in a minor, junior-grade fashion, this turned out, not too surprisingly, to be me.

# # #

Back on the farm in Topeka, it had stood just outside the garage doors, halfway down the slope to the barn; it was a black-walnut sapling and its name was Louise. On one occasion Rick had earned from Dad one of his rare switchings for letting Old Nig get loose and chomp off its leaves. As it grew, the way everything seemed to grow in those days, in its own time and by its own rules, in its prime it furnished us with fine black walnuts which we could pick up right at our back door. It served other purposes, too; for Dad had named it after Louise Merlin.

Louise was a soft-cheeked fair-haired girl in her mid-twenties, blue-eyed and tender-hearted, and she came often to the farm with her father and mother as a place to go on Sunday afternoons, to wander through the woods or to sit around the big oak table, playing pitch or rummy in the cool of the evenings. In July 1920, the rest of the family was in Maine, and Louise and her mother and father came out to stay with Dad, to escape the heat of the pavements and to enjoy the fresh vegetables and cool breezes of Taycroft. Dad, asleep on the front porch, at day-break felt a pale and trembling hand plucking at his bedsheet. As courteously as he could, he got up and dressed, and after putting Old Flo between the shafts, treated love's captive to a buggy ride in the early dawn. As if this were not enough, he compounded his offense against the finest traditions of American manhood by telling Mother all about it in his next letter.

"If he *had*," Mother told me some time later, "Oh, if he *had*, I'd just have gotten a divorce and taken all you kids back to live with Grampie in Monticello."

Well, he *hadn't*; but still, at forty-two, with his handsome, smiling presence, his gentility and his clippings of poetry from *The Kansas City Star*, he kept on attracting and being attracted by women. In the very teeth of Mother's protests, he continued to lavish precious water and man-hours on his sweet-pea garden and to bear the pastel scented blossoms, gift-wrapped in waxed paper bearing the insignia of Butter-Krust Bread, to Olive Maddox and other stenographers at the office.

Along in the middle of July, probably cutting her visit short,

Mother came back to Topeka, and about that time, doubtless with a sense of profound relief, Dad found himself at a prolonged rate hearing in St. Louis. While there, he received some anguished epistles from Taycroft-On-The-Hill:

“Dear Mr. Tay: (sic)

Here is Crazy Suzy in the big giant’s house on the hill, captive, that wander about the earth aiming at everything bad and hitting nothing. Wonder what it would be like to be in the gang taking Moscow this bright beautiful morning: I know it does not matter to you whether I get up at five or nine — if it had, you would have given me more in detail of what you were doing out here when I was gone: I could write lots if I only knew of a surety that you cared. I feel now just as I did when I was nineteen; how I longed to delve into Eternity then.”

A letter written a week earlier is in the same vein, and contains, also, the Eternity theme:

“ — but anyway perhaps heaven will have a way behind the thrones, some hidden stream in a wild wild tangle-wood of sweet-smelling flowers and roses, a place for me to rest.”

Eternity then, and hidden streams banked with wild roses; in any event, finally the storm blew over, but still the tree kept on being called Louise, and at some time or other, in a touch worthy of Theocritus, one of Old Nig’s heifers was endowed with the same name.

I don’t recall being especially moved by all that at the time, but apparently I was picking up on it all along, not only as a proper life-style but also as a guerilla tactic in the war between the sexes.

Now in Dallas almost twenty years later, sometime early in 1939, I found myself drawn in much the same sentimental way to one of the girls in the Gang.

Deirdre, the wife of Dr. Ted (“Spike”) Angrist, was, like me, a member of Romantics Anonymous; she was a blue-stockings, with a B.A. in English from Radcliffe and was a yearner-and-striver after the Good, the True and the Beautiful. She was blue-eyed and beige-blonde, vivacious but not pretty, and endowed, like Tangee, with little-boy breasts and a happy if compulsive nature. We quoted poetry to each other and exchanged what might have passed in the novels of Booth Tarkington for burning glances; and, in common with the innocent heterosexual custom of the times, saluted each other chastely with a peck on the cheek when we met. Beyond this there was nothing, not even any of the “kitchen-kissing” as Orianne dubbed it, in which some other members of the Gang indulged, a pastime which served mostly to relieve the tedium of preparing tuna

fish sandwiches and iced tea for our picnics.

In fine, our relationship was one of dull and unrelieved purity, one which would have made the courtship of Sir Galahad resemble that of Jacques Casanova; one which was on a level with those of Howard Tay, the bearer of sweet peas and the quoter of Omar Khayyam. Still, it had the same effect on Orianne that Dad's actions had had on Mother: the weight and quality of the woe was the same, and continued just as inexorably into the future.

The women of the Gang regarded all this with bemused fascination, although it is doubtful if any of them thought of it as an actual affair, such a matter being something that their husbands only were allowed to have, and even at that, before but not after wedlock.

"There goes the finest man in Dallas," my old Y.M.C.A. buddy Ashley Shale once told me that Henry Jacoby had said to him on seeing me walk through the lobby; but after the onset of my compulsive fancy for Deirdre, it is doubtful if this sentiment was shared by the male members of the Gang. In their eyes doubtless I suffered a dropping of esteem, along with the male envy which the ladies' man, even such an amateur as I, alternately enjoys and endures. Then also, perhaps their feelings in some ways resembled that of the Southern racist, whose deepest contempt is reserved not for the "nigger" but for the "nigger-lover," for somebody, that is, who ought to be for him but isn't, for somebody who has gone over to the other side.

Along with all this I burned, typically enough, for recognition, and in the course of this learned to tell fortunes by cards, and even to recite Frank Deprez' "Lasca," complete with Del Sarte gestures.

"He could imitate Irving, tell fortunes by cards,

And strum on the Spanish guitar;

In fact, quite the cream of the Muscovite team

Was Ivan Skivitsky Skivar."

In the same vein, mindful of old easy triumphs with the Tillotsons in Amarillo, I appeared once at a party as Groucho Marx, complete with white linen suit, long cigar, bushy eyebrows and mustache. However, the only eyebrows that were raised were mine; not a word was said, and the dinner party proceeded. During this time, also, I became a hit-and-run monologist, one who would go to a party, monopolize the conversation for an hour or so and then, "Come on Poo, we've got to go," I would announce without warning, and drag my wife, protesting, out the door. Some clue to this behavior might be found in a chance remark of Trixie Hydell's: "Why do you waste your time with these people — you don't *care* anything about them?" she asked me one night at a party, and I stared at her stricken, in disbelief and panic. Not *care* about them! What did she

mean! But for all that I continued to "go home early, to get my sleep" and Orianne and I continued to quarrel about it.

Then too, as the years rolled by, all the women except Orianne became baggy-gutted with child, and the conversation gradually cut us out as it shifted from idle gossip and badinage to such matters as diapers, breast-feeding and early morning sickness.

Along with all that, little sprigs of prosperity began to poke up here and there through the concrete, and everybody but the Tays somehow managed to buy a lot out in the Bluff View addition and to hire Arch Banks or some other enterprising young architect to design a "mod-run" house to put on it. Once more there was a coming about in the table-talk which left Orianne and me stranded, with the mention of such matters as down-payments, the roughing-in of a second bathroom and the innate depravity of crab-grass.

Yes, while all the other members of the Gang were raising roof-trees and changing diapers, we continued to live on Blackburn Street and to play with our cats, while I padded along at about the same pace with the practice of the law.

One day in the Santa Fe drugstore I was accosted by Dave Dove.

"What you doin' these days, Loki — practicin' law, or just economy?"

"Oh, I'm gettin' along all right, I guess — just the other day, made a ten dollar fee along with a couple of small ones."

This was standard courthouse repartee, and we both slipped easily into it, but then Dave added, "Yeah, I know what you mean. Sometimes it seems you get up to two-fifty a month and just get stuck there."

Two-fifty a month! My God; I was making half of that, still nurturing the illusion that the depression was at fault, and my heart sank with despair, as then and later I continued to suffer the agonies of him who has to win but cannot bear to compete.

For all that, Orianne never complained, and with a food budget of twenty dollars a month and another thirty for rent, with lemon-crack gasoline at thirteen cents a gallon, and white shirts at a dollar apiece from Penney's we managed to exist year after year, on my earnings.

When our courage ran low, "Cheer up — perhaps these are the golden years and we know it not!" I would say, in a burst of mingled rhetoric, hope and despair, and so on we went. Downtown, for long hours I loafed in the office, standing at the window, brooding down at the heartless brick and the drab lace curtains of the Waldorf Hotel, or sitting with Tewk in his office, both of us in shirt sleeves and with our feet cocked up on the desk like country lawyers, philosophizing, bumming matches and pipe tobacco from each

other, and dreaming of better times to come.

I had some ill-founded expectations that when I married into the Martine Music Company I would become the company lawyer, but for two years all was silence, and when I finally received the call I found only some piddling collection letters to write and an occasional repossession suit to file. I did not know how to charge, anyway, and when I showed my percentage schedule to Tewk, his only reaction was to drawl, "Judge, I think you're sellin' your mules too cheap."

Along with Jake Newburg, Red Monroe and Norrie Hughes, Tewk was one of the town's leading criminal lawyers, but at this time he tried only one or two major cases a year, and mostly our work consisted of the odds and ends of general practice, divorces, traffic tickets and damage suits. Over the years, I tried a few of these plaintiffs' cases myself, striving mightily with such champions of the lists as Frank Ford and Logan Ryburn, and invariably getting my butt beat in court. On these occasions, there was always the sinking feeling, the same that I used to get before violin recitals, with my stomach turned to concrete and my tongue to a seared strip of bacon, as the jury panel filed into the courtroom at the beginning of trial. It was small consolation that Dallas was, and still is, a defendant's town, with the panels loaded with white-collar insurance and utility personnel and with the plaintiff regarded as a whining malingerer who probably in all his life never did an honest day's work or met a payroll.

Yes, it was the prospect of failure and not the lack of experience in public speaking, that panicked me. For during most of my stay at the Y., I had enrolled in the Toastmaster's Club under the kindly expert guidance of Dr. Floyd Poe, and had taken on a fair amount of poise at public speaking. Then too, I had pulled an oar in various political campaigns, in an era when speakings were held under the electric lights in Lee or Kiest Park, or at backyard gatherings where on behalf of our candidates we passed out cards and "said a few words." In this way, I had helped put Dick Dixon and W. L. Thornton on district court benches and had supported, most disastrously, Bob Alcorn for sheriff. Bob was running against the solidly entrenched Smoot Schmid. For Bob's candidacy, Orianne and I held a party of our own, and Bob showed up to speak, a quiet elegantly dressed man of middle age with a deep sunburn and a painfully sincere manner. As one of Smoot's former deputies, he had taken a hand in some of the era's most spectacular man-hunts.

"Don't tell us why you want to be sheriff," Snookie Dawson burst out, "just tell us how you killed Bonnie and Clyde," and for the following hour or so Bob obliged, holding us all glued to our chairs,

six years or so after the event, and almost thirty before the big movie.

Well, all that, the public speaking and the tumult and torchlight of campaigning, were enjoyable; and then too, I basked in the prestige of being a professional man, of belonging to a select group which had about it the ring and stamp of authority, an air of tradition and of old parchment, of Law-Latin and rusty Norman-French, of *ceste qui trust*, *idem sonans*, and of defendants who put themselves upon the country. There was even beauty and comfort in the majestic Copernican ranks of the legal relationships, of landlord-and-tenant, guardian-and-ward, bailor-and-bailee; where, no matter which way the kaleidoscope turned, there was always order and place.

So during these years my skies were not all gray, and during those years also, at least twice the Bitch-Goddess Success came whining up to me in heat, only to be kicked away.

Shalo Westboyd, a pipeline contractor in Ft. Worth, was an old friend whom Tewk had known in New Mexico. He used our offices as his Dallas headquarters and was in and out of them all the time. Here, like Dag Hydell hoarding his tailor-made suits, Shalo could store his hundred-dollar Panamas, stacking them one above the other in our closet; here also he could use the phones, pick up his calls and meet his women.

His tastes in flesh ran to what the college boys would have termed pigs, or cunt-dates; he, who could have had his pick-and-choose of all the Grandes Horizontales in Dallas County found himself instead in the company of manicurists or lounge-cashiers, of heavy-limbed odalisques, cow-eyed, given to gin and leisure and with only a utilitarian, housewifely interest in sex.

He was a tall, athletic, restless, driven man, black-haired and hot-eyed, fond of diamonds and Hickey-Freeman tailoring. Like his friend Henry Irish of the Red Wall Freight Lines, Shalo had started out as a po' boy, but now, along with Henry's, his business had really began to roll and he was enjoying every minute of it.

He paid little attention to me, breezing by my door in his sharkskins and alligator shoes, and flinging a "Hello, there," over his shoulder. One day though, he paused for a moment, standing at my doorpost, too restless to sit down, impatient as a sportscar driver, balancing himself on the balls of his feet like a boxer.

"Say, I've been noticing you around here; you seem to be able to play that typewriter pretty well, and Tewk tells me you're a hard workin' man. You know, I never had much of a chance at education, had to quit school early and all that. I'm not too good with words, but you seem to talk pretty well, and I just wondered, maybe some day you'd like to work for me, go around with me, where I do,

sort of be my assistant. How's about it?"

His twangy Plains accent buzzed in my ears, and his eyes drilled into mine. I cannot recall my reply, but I said in effect, thanks just the same, but I guessed I'd go on being a lawyer, practicing there with Tewk, saying to myself surely things will get better.

"Well, think it over," he said, spun around on his heel and was gone.

Then three years or so later, just after I was married and was still living at the Martines', one evening my father-in-law asked me to step into the living-room and meet a neighbor who had come over from across the street. I found myself shaking hands with a short balding man of about fifty, with a bold stare and a piratical hooked nose.

"Mr. Dumfries," I said, "I'm glad to meet you," and the three of us sat down for an informal visit. I had seen him before in the Santa Fe Building, but had no idea who he was, nor now, what he was about. Soon enough the talk led to Russia and a denouncing of "those Bolsheviks," and I, who neither knew nor cared about such matters, nevertheless smarted-off with some remarks of a mild liberal cast taken from the teachings of Professor Irwin or *The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens*. After half an hour or so of this seemingly pointless discussion, I excused myself and drifted on back to the bedroom where, as I knew, the powdered thighs and black lace underwear of my young bride were awaiting me.

Whatever else went on that evening is lost to history, but next day I was casually informed that Ian Dumfries was not only chief poker-player but also associate chief counsel for oil billionaire H. L. Hunt, and had been on the look-out for a brisk young apprentice.

Years later, after Dumfries' death my father-in-law mentioned the name of the lawyer who had taken his place, and added, "He came in today and bought a nice Steinway grand," shooting a significant, reproachful glance in my direction, and this time I read him loud and clear.

Looking back on all this now, I suspect that perhaps my liberalism may have been a little more than skin-deep, for early in our marriage I renewed my nodding acquaintance with the Unitarian faith. By 1938, The Dallas Unitarians had abandoned their old stone church-house on South Ervay Street and were meeting in Scott Hall, at the corner of Maple and Alice. Here, I was not long in meeting Elmer Scott himself, a bustling, white-haired gnome of a man who in his day had been a merchandising whiz for Sears Roebuck. He had left Sears however, to become the city's high priest of adult education, and to bear aloft a liberal torch into the bat-caves of Dallas conservatism. A former glass of fashion, he had by this time



become, in John Rosenfield's phrase, strictly a one-suit man, and looking like Bertrand Russell, tore around town in perpetual rumpled blue serge, hatless, with his curved pipe forever at his mouth and his blue eyes a-twinkle. The original Scott Hall had been a two-story Victorian frame house, with more turrets and porticoes than I ever cared to remember, but with the help of Karl Hoblitzelle and others of a benign progressive stripe he had managed to add-on a well-proportioned little auditorium which would seat three or four hundred butts of the local truth-seekers. Here a hundred or so Unitarians met on Sunday mornings to harken to the Gospel According to Ken Gesner.

Ken, a happy-natured rubicund young man with an aureole of Viking-red hair, held forth, as had the Reverend Estey in Topeka, in morning coat and striped trousers. He was a deist, which did not surprise me, who had never encountered a humanist; and his preaching was the best I had ever heard, being of an inspired rhetorical sort, presented with enormous flair and dramatic impact. Outside of this however, he had few sacerdotal interests, and finally, after a number of years, left Dallas to accept a snug little pastorate in Boston, not too far from the Unitarian "Vatican" on Beacon Street. Here, in a tidy rich parish, where old ladies drove to worship in 1925 Rolls Royces, Ken could lead the life of a polite and witty vicar, like that of a sporting parson in a novel by Surtees or Siegfried Sassoon. Here, he could preach eloquently during the nine months' season and spend the summers surf-fishing on Cape Cod, and here he died, doubtless to spend Eternity Up There, or as the Unitarians might put it, Out There, in the Great Library in the Sky, discoursing with Buddha and Emerson on The True Nature of the Good.

And so passed the summer of 1938 and then that of 1939, when I nourished the illusion that my central problem was economic in nature, when we watched "and waited for the light/ And went without the meat and cursed the bread" (which at that time was selling for ten cents a loaf). September 1938, had seen the conference at Munich, and now, in the same month of 1939, came the invasion of Poland. In the first week of that fatal month, I presided as toastmaster at a banquet of the Junior Bar, and once more ignored the nudge of Fortune at my elbow. It was my first experience as presiding-wit, and to my astonishment I found myself a resounding success. Afterwards, Judge Winter King, a stout genial man with a cognomen which might have served as a brand-name for a line of car heaters or thermal underwear, came up to me.

"Well now Tay — you were just great. Wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed it. You sure are a genius at that stuff." Thus Win-

ter, who had seen me in court many a time but with nary a compliment, but once again my mind was elsewhere, and I thanked him briefly and turned my thoughts back to war.

For I knew that it would be 1914 all over again, but in company with most of my generation I had long thought that global conflict could never happen again. For years I had been reading with horror and fascination the plays and novels of The Great War — *Journey's End*, *What Price Glory*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and so on. At college I had listened to the peace-movement evangelists, who had detailed the agonies of trench warfare, and along with them, had envisioned ripped—out guts, bloody teeth scattered on the frozen ground, fingers bent backward, and of screaming, vomiting men in their death-throes. I knew that I was horrified and afraid, but was not to find out for many a year just what the real fear was.

For months before all this, with the example of the Gang before us, Orianne and I had been striving to become parents, but in spite of the most dedicated and prolonged love making, together with medical advice and lab tests, we remained unsuccessful. Now, doubly motivated, knowing that men with children would stand a better chance of exemption, I marched into Tewk's office late in September, 1939. Pleading bad health instead of fear, I told him I needed to take a month off to rest and that I planned to go to Colorado to recuperate.

At the cabin, instead of letting me lounge about, Orianne, the frustrated architect and nest-builder, found herself in full happy charge. Under her direction, instead of loafing we spent the month hammering, sawing and fitting, putting in an extra closet and making two bedrooms out of the open porch. When our month was up, rough-handed but still barren, Orianne helped me board up the cabin, and we drove back to Dallas. We were just in time to welcome Mrs. Martine back home, she who had left for Europe in the grand manner back in August, departing from the Katy station in Highland Park surrounded by loved ones, faithful ten-dollar-a-week black Tillie, and tiers of matched luggage. Mrs. Martine then, who with the fate of the Athenia in mind and with still earlier memories of the Lusitania, had made it back across The Pond, and now was facing six years of roughing it on the American continents, of making-do with resorts at Lake Placid and Sun Valley, in Buenos Aires and Acapulco.

So, with the end of 1939, the peoples of this planet slipped down into the pit of World War II, and, with the coming of 1940, within the Tay family at Amarillo another, private struggle was heating up. For two and a half years, Rick had been leading the teased and

tortured life of one who is sick this week and well the next, well this week and sick the next; he had found a life of sorts at Sanitarium, Texas, near San Angelo, and there Orianne and I had visited him on several occasions. He had got well enough to practice a little medicine during the mornings, taking his rest, "chasing the cure" in the afternoons. He had even, in February 1940, got married.

Tina Goree was an Amarillo girl, of about his own age, a person with enormous charm and courage. She was devoted to Rick and bravely spent her honeymoon with him at The San. Their Spring was not too bad, but then in early Summer, a massive rib resection was prescribed, and on June 12th they came to Dallas for the operations. He arrived at the Union Terminal around noon, a thin and weary man in green herringbone tweeds, both he and Tina coming down the platform toward us wearing brave little smiles.

We drove him out to Gaston Hospital, across the street from Baylor, and there during the next few weeks, in a series of operations Dr. Bob Shane took out four or five of his ribs. Tina valiantly stayed with him through the days and nights of agony, dozing in a cot by his side, trying to cheer him up, feeding him, and keeping him shaved and presentable. I dropped by to see him every morning and then went down to the office to type out my daily post-card bulletin to Amarillo. Dad came down with Mother for every operation: "Once more unto the breach, dear friends," he would say, avoiding my gaze, hunching up his shoulders and lowering his head like a bull about to charge.

Sometimes the news from the sickbed was good, but mostly it was bad, and then in October 1940, Rick went back to Amarillo and moved into the spacious upper room on Madison Street. On the night of the 24th, around nine o'clock, Tina gave him his shot of morphine, and just before midnight Mother went in to tell him good-night, and found that he had developed urgent business elsewhere and was no longer with us.

I got a quick pass on a jury case that was scheduled for trial in Tom Nash's County Court at Law, and Orianne and I drove to Amarillo. There, at Blackburn's Funeral Home, I was expected to visit and view the corpse, but could not bear the sight of the dead upturned face, and fled weeping into the night. Later I returned, and, as was also expected, kept watch all night with the corpse, sitting there with averted gaze, trying to think of the good times Rick and I had spent together, thinking of Kidd Springs and Vilia Mae Grandison, of making the drag on Polk Street in the Gorgeous Green Chariot, of playing "Sweet Sue" with Fox Mahaffey, and of Here We Go with the Leonard boys along the banks of the Shunganunga.

A week or so before, both Dad and Mother had been stricken with flu, and now only he, and with painful effort at that, could go to the funeral. This was held on a cold, wintry day, at the Central Presbyterian Church, and burial was at Llano Cemetery, out beyond the switchyards in the Southeast part of town. "Has your reading helped you any?" Mother asked Dad as they both gloomed about the house. "Yes, I've been reading some of the books, about men who lost their sons, and it helps a little."

I did not have even that much consolation: years before, I had set myself the goal of becoming an authority on John Keats, had read all the poetry several times and all the biographies I could corner. After 1937 however, the spectacle of the poet's untimely death from tuberculosis rose up to haunt me and I could read no more. Now, in 1940 especially, I recalled Keat's death in Rome, with only his friend, Joseph Severn in attendance. "I lifted him up in my arms," Severn reported in one of his letters, "and the phlegm seemed boiling in his throat."

So we all continued to mourn, each after his own fashion; and I never heard Dad speak of Rick again, at least not in his rational mind, but both before and after Rick's death, the heart-rending entries in Mother's diaries continued for the rest of her life:

"Laid awake and heard chimes . . . The days go so slow and our hearts ache. Rick got his shot-bag fixed, but his fluid is all over on the right side and he feels that he is drowning . . . Went clear crazy from being shut up, so he sleeps with all lights on in room and he cannot rest but he says his mouth is so dry . . . House does crack, and it is Rick's spirit coming back and trying to comfort us . . . Awakened at midnight, and Dad told of going through house, and met Rick and he said he was well, and kissed Dad with his red rosy lips and cheeks and he no more than 18. All day we were comforted."

During the next twelve months or so, I adjusted as best I could and continued on with my old way of life. Then, one Sunday morning early in December, 1941, I returned to our apartment on Blackburn Street from a chaste but pleasant visit to Deirdre Angrist. I found Orianne ironing shirts, standing in the hallway by the kitchen and listening, but not really listening, to the radio.

"My God," I said, after a minute or so, "do you hear what they're saying on the radio?"

"No, I haven't been paying much attention — it just goes on and on, you know how those news programs are."

"Well," I said, trying to bring off something memorable, something that would go down in history, "it's another bombing raid,

only this time it's on us, some place out in Hawaii — and we seem to be at war with Japan."

# # #

"That *wonderful* war! Well, I know that sounds just terrible, but then, things were *so* good — Ed and I both worked out at North American — it seemed like everybody had a job and kept getting those big paychecks, with the overtime and all. Oh, I know it was awful, all those people getting killed and everything, but then, every one of the boys that we knew, the ones that went, you know, got back safe; and then, well, as I said, there was all that money, and the overtime."

Thus Bernadette Grolier, sheet-music clerk, Martine Music Company, circa 1953.

During the weeks that followed December 7, 1941, the law practice saw little of me. Many of the lawyers my age or younger were signing up for commissions, and, caught up in the general excitement, my lust for status and gentility overcoming my fears, I put in my application with theirs. My heart leaped up when I heard that Nate Burrows, my old Sunday School teacher at the First Methodist, had some kind of drag with the recruiters of Army officers. I hustled my bustle over to his offices at Trinity Universal, only to be met with a polite but chilly reception. All my other applications seemed to be getting about the same treatment, so, restless as a bridegroom at a wedding reception, in the middle of January 1942, I set out for Washington, D. C.

A year or so before, I had become friends with Bick Ernststrom, who kept an office down on the tenth floor. Bick was a tall, stooped, hulking man from the piney woods of East Texas. He was about my age, a liberal with a pleasant homespun wit, and as yet free from the distressing paranoia which later on was to engulf him. He was a transportation lawyer, having been one of Attorney General Bill McCraw's bright young boys, and now as General Counsel for the struggling Coast-to-Coast Bus Lines, he wangled a pass for me to the nation's capitol and return.

In Washington, again "in a strange city, seeking employment," I tramped the snowy streets, and sat for hours in the implacable, ass-hating chairs of government reception offices. I wearily filled out one Form 1040 after another, stifling, perhaps with unfortunate results, the impulse to over-state my salary, and somehow managed a

flying visit to Manon and my charming little nieces in Philadelphia. In my desperation I even sought out an old acquaintance from K. U. days, one Bruce Acheson. Bruce's father sat augustly on the bench of the Interstate Commerce Commission, and Bruce himself now had a captaincy in the Army. He did what he could to get one for me too, but the Army was wiser than both of us, and I got nothing. With all the forms behind me, after a couple of weeks I packed my bag once more and set out for Dallas. I arrived there two days later, dizzy with fatigue and exhaust-smoke and with hazy memories of being accosted by a drunken female during a wild midnight ride through the Appalachians in a snowstorm.

"Hey, Tiger," she whispered, "hey, Tiger — do you hear me, come on back here; hey, do you hear me, let's just you and me get in that big back seat, just you and me, and I'll show you a good time."

Well, as I told it to the Gang later on to their vast merriment, my name wasn't Tiger, so in spite of the fact that it was the only offer of any kind that I had received on the trip, I said nothing in reply, turned over and went back to sleep.

In Dallas, I found that the Navy had dusted off one of my applications and in a moment of hysteria had decided to consider me, now on the eve of my thirty-fourth birthday, as a naval aviation cadet. This time I bought my own ticket, on the day coach to New Orleans, so as to appear for the physical. The wine and oysters, the sin and gaiety of The Crescent City were lost upon me; I stayed only one day, just long enough to stand, stripped and dangling, in a drafty warehouse while the doctors questioned and probed, peering at flanks and fetlocks, to see if I were free of the heaves and spavin and would stand without hitchin'. Whoever was in charge said that in due time the Navy would be in touch, and I went to the depot and climbed back on the T. and P. for Dallas.

Once more in my home town, I found a telegram from the F.B.I. in response to an application I had filed in Washington. Now, I hurried downtown and sat for an hour or so with a bored sarcastic young sprout who asked why, if I wanted to serve my country, I hadn't joined the Army.

"I've got applications in everywhere," I said, "you name it — Army, Navy, Marines."

"For a commission?"

"Sure. Why not?"

I failed to add that I had decided to die, if die I must, as a gentleman, or failing that, to be led forth shrieking to the South and clutching at the North. I had this sentiment in common with Jed Turnbull of the Gang, who vowed that if drafted, he would arrive at the induction center with both arms still wrapped around the bedpost.

So February and March wore away, and a contemptuous indifference was all that I seemed to have received from my efforts to better my condition and at the same time help my country in its hour of need.

In any event, as the weeks rolled by my heart was less and less at the office and more and more elsewhere; and finally, on April 11, 1942, almost seven years from the day when I had walked in, I decided to walk out.

I found myself then, in Tewk's office, standing before his desk; found myself saying,

"Well, Judge, I don't know how to say it, but I find that I just can't do this anymore."

He looked up from his book with astonishment but perhaps also with a sense of relief, and that afternoon we worked out the dissolution of the partnership. I signed a release for all my interest in the books or furniture, and also released Tewksberry Jackson from any and all liability in any manner or fashion connected with our union or its affairs. With no more ado, I put the stuff from my desk into a couple of large manila envelopes, took the Japanese prints down from the walls, and got my five dollar Resistol snap-brim from the closet.

Tewk was standing at the door of his office, and as I came out of my door, he reached out his hand.

"Well, Judge, I want to say I've enjoyed the association."

"Well, yes," I said, "all right, then," stifling as best I could the sentiment that for me it had been the worst seven years of my life, and with my hat at a churlish angle, walked out of Suite 1403, Santa Fe Building, forever.

By this time, although the war was only four months old, the government was already sponsoring college courses in engineering and management. Hearing of these, a week or so later I buzzed out to S.M.U. and signed up for a non-credit, tuition-free course in Production Control.

The class was a mixed bag of twenty-five or thirty students — draft-dodgers, housewives out for a thrill, clerk-typists who yearned to become war-plant executives, and the usual student-dilettantes who will take any course anywhere, anytime, provided the school is handy and the price is right.

Our professor was a sharp young cookie from Chicago, and with him, for the first time I ventured into the mysterious realms of industry and management, studying and discussing such arcane matters as flow charts, time-and-motion studies, plant layout, and the policy of promotion-from-within.

About this time, also, I happened to run into Bick Ernstrom,



sauntering along the street, on the lookout as usual for a kaffee-klatch companion who would give him an excuse for not going up to the office and working. I told him what I was up to these days and he offered me a part-time job, briefing for him at five dollars a day. I jumped at the chance, and plunged into both my projects with great zest, working twelve and fourteen hours a day. I studied hard and stood near the top of the class, although I had to call on my father-in-law or my friend Charlie Conway occasionally for help whenever I hit a snag in the fields of math or engineering.

As if all this activity were not enough, Orianne and I were singing under Daniel Sternberg's direction in the chorus of Hockaday School's production of *The Snow Maiden*. One starry spring night, after studying at Fondren Library I walked across the S.M.U. campus with Rimsky Korsakov's melodies running through my head. I thought enviously of the lovely rich young girls in the cast, and of their war-free, or at least draft-free existence.

"God, I wish I didn't have to go to war," I said aloud, looking toward Mockingbird Lane and seeing the lights of downtown Dallas glowing above the treetops. If I didn't have this damned war to attend to, I thought, I could move to Austin, get a degree in English, and afterwards land a job teaching at S.M.U. and stroll beneath these happy academic elms forever.

In addition to all this, there was, that Spring, another musical involvement which seemed trifling enough at the time. For the past year or so Orianne and I had been listening to a fifteen-minute sustaining radio program on Sunday mornings.

"His name is Burl Ives," she had said, calling my attention to the show, "and he sings what he calls folk songs."

"Sure," I said, "but they're just like those old-timey songs that we used to sing, standing around the piano, the ones that the song-books said were written by Anon."

After this, I began to sing some of the songs, and as a gag, at Christmas-time in 1941, Orianne presented me with a used Harmony guitar which she had found in the junk room at Martine's and had bought for three dollars.

Then, early in May 1942, I sat on the greensward just outside our bedroom window, strumming away, probably working on some old reliable such as "Oh Dear, What Can The Matter Be," or "Polly Wolly Doodle." I was barefooted, in shirt and slacks, and Orianne sat with me, sipping iced tea. A sudden rainstorm came up, and to protect the guitar I swept it up together with some cushions and iced tea glasses, and ran whooping into the house. We went to bed then, not knowing that upstairs, in the Dickinson's apartment above us, my future was hanging in the balance.

The next morning, Alice Dickinson paused on her way up the outside staircase.

"There was a man here last night, just before that storm came up: asking about you, wanted to know all about your character and habits, and everything. Said you had applied for some sort of job with the government."

I was as bewildered as either Alice or Orianne at this news, but I could feel a zinging of the heart-strings; perhaps somebody wants me after all. I thought, perhaps — perhaps — and then, a few days later, came the telegram.

Like the poor and illiterate, I had always regarded telegrams as portents of disaster, but that day somehow I knew that this was going to be different, and I ripped open the little yellow window-envelope and read the golden words: "Junior Investigator, Civil Service Commission, CAF-7, \$2600 per annum. Almost constant travel. Stationed New Orleans. Report for interview, Dallas, Federal Building, 9 A.M. May 15th."

"Oh God," I said: "*Oh, God!*"

I held the crackling paper in my trem-balin' hand; and seven years of failure and envy and despair fell from me. It was the news of the bringing in of Spindletop; they had planted the flag at the Pole; the glass slipper had found its pre-ordained foot; and the U.S. Cavalry had just galloped in from Ft. Sill.

Needless to say, I arrived at the Commission's offices well ahead of time on the appointed day. There, a tall and solemn black-haired young man of sallow complexion went over my application with me. This was Asa B. Tirey, he who had barely missed seeing his applicant run whooping and bare-footed in the rain, chasing a handsome but disheveled red-head into the house and brandishing a guitar and a couple of glasses.

Like a pregnant fiancée, I happily answered yes to everything; would I mind constant travel — I would love it; would I mind leaving Dallas — I had been ready to do just that for years; would I mind living in New Orleans — did a cat like cream, was there a hog in Georgia — Oh, yesyesyes.

With never a thought that we might need it again, we gave up our month-to-month lease on the apartment and arranged to have all our household goods shipped to New Orleans. Our friends and especially the Gang, envied us and plied us with advice.

"Oh, you'll just *love* the French Quarter — they call it the Vieux Carré, you know — and just wait til you see all those beautiful antebellum houses — and go out to the Lake and eat shrimp!"

"Good Lord," said Glenn Boke, a fellow counselor to whom I broke the news, "Good Lord — twenty-six hundred a year — and

living in New Orleans — where do you get a job like *that*?"

I smiled in a superior and odious fashion and walked on up the street, and went on with my plans for departure. Of course I still had the wedding-gift Plymouth, but its tires were wearing thin, and in those days there were only re-treads to be had. With no hesitation I drove it up to Amarillo and exchanged it, with hardly a by-your-leave, for a better car. The year before, Dad at sixty-three had purchased a nifty six-cylindereed Pontiac business coupe, "to last us through retirement." This little two-toned model with its lovely deep-treaded tires, I now drove back to Dallas, and in it, a few days later, Orianne and I set out for our new home. We drove through Shreveport and Baton Rouge, noticing as we went deeper into the Southland, that the air was growing moist and warm, that palm trees were beginning to appear on the skyline and Spanish moss on the live-oaks and magnolias that lined the bayous. We arrived in New Orleans in the early evening, and betook ourselves at once to the French Quarter.

I was in a state of ecstasy and hopped about and chattered like a bluejay high on Dexamil. This was *mon pays*, my true country, and I had found it at last: For years I had visited this place in dreams; this place, or one like it. I knew these narrow streets and cobblestoned alleys, the green-shuttered stucco houses with the iron balconies, the little shops (boutiques, rather) with, in the dream at least, the foreign signs, Tabac, and Parfum, lettered above the striped awnings. Yes, the dream-scene was always the same, and my feeling about it the same, one of release and wild happiness like the "rush" of the heroin fix; the streets were deserted, always, and a cemetery-quiet lay upon them, broken only by my exclamations.

"I've always dreamed of being in Paris, but now I'm really here!" I would yell again and again, only to wake up, still yelling, to find myself back at the Y.M.C.A. or on Blackburn Street in Dallas. ("There, there, Loki — it's only a dream.")

Now we wandered about the streets, viewing the antique shops and the strip-joints, the bars and the famous restaurants, the Original Absinthe House and Pat O'Brien's, Antoine's and Arnaud's, Galatoire's, and The Court of the Two Sisters. We paid a brief visit to some friends of John and Nora Brandon's who lived in the Pontalba Apartments on Jackson Square. They served us a Sazerac, and hearing that we were house-hunting, offered us the third story above them, for thirty dollars a month. For some reason we demurred, and after some more sight-seeing, went back to our motel. Here, far out on the highway we were awakened deliciously several times during the night by the hoarse bellows of the boats on the river. "Just listen to those steamboat whistles," I said joyously, and rolled over and

went back to sleep.

The next day, for less than forty dollars a month, we found an apartment at 810 Dumaine Street, the second floor of a century-old house deep in the Vieux Carré. Entrance was through an unpainted wooden gate set into the high board fence along the sidewalk property line. After passing through an elegant little brick courtyard, we climbed the outside stairway to our apartment. It was dank but spacious, high-ceilinged and elegantly proportioned. We did not mind the creaky floors nor the single unshaded light globe which glared from the ceiling of the kitchen, a room which had formerly constituted the slave quarters.

Just a few blocks away, little dreaming of its destiny, the Streetcar Named Desire ground along over its bumpy tracks, and not too far distant was the Dumaine Street Wharf, formerly called the Picayune Tier. Here in the old days, the Greek and Italian traders would moor their square-sailed coastal luggers and dispense their cargoes of fish, oysters and vegetables, and so far as that goes, smuggled goods from Barataria. As a war-time measure, this area was now closely guarded, but through the gates we could see the masts and loading cranes and the black, rusted hulls of the freighters.

The street was narrow, with stone gutters, and the evidences of stray, uncurbed dogs lay everywhere; as they said, you had to watch your step while walking through Dogtown. Here, as elsewhere in the Quarter, the thoroughfare swarmed with bums, prostitutes, Negro laborers, nuns, homosexuals, drunks, servicemen on liberty, tourists, and upper-class devotees of *La Vie Bohème* who had set themselves up in expensive flats in the Quarter.

On the morning of the 25th, brash, bright and early, I reported for duty at the Old Custom House on lower Canal Street. I paused for a moment before going in, seeing the magnificent boulevard with the shops on either side, stretching away to the North and East, the ponderous street cars grinding their way along at a leisurely, antebellum pace between the ornate cast-iron street lamps. Looking the other way I could see the wooden Algiers ferry building, and sensing the mighty river that lay beyond and with the smell of roasting coffee in my nostrils, I took a deep breath and entered the building.

This three-story structure had a reputation for being one of the handsomest old buildings in the South. It had been built of Quincy granite in 1848 at a cost of five million dollars, and its Marble Hall with its sixty-foot dome and its white marble floor and columns, was still intact. The offices of the Civil Service Commission were on the third floor, and above them lay an attic-like space which had at one time seen service as a military prison for Confederate soldiers. This, as I soon learned, was dubbed by my boss The Black Pit of Cal-

cutta, and here in the months to come, in the musty gloom I would crouch at a ramshackle desk, busy with my expense accounts and dictation.

Now, I rode the elevator up to the third floor and was soon shaking hands with my new boss, J. Northcutt Roberson, an amiable rotund man of about forty, had the air of a mild-mannered but ambitious bull-dog. Just a few months before he had been an ordinary investigator, but recent events had catapulted him into name and fame, and now he was in charge of half a hundred men and a territory that included Louisiana and nearly all of the State of Texas. As I found out later, he was a good man, with earnest Christian lines about the mouth, but not quite sane on the subject of bowling.

The office was the usual bull-pen, its gray steel file cabinets encircling the ranks of clerk-typists who sat with ear phones, transcribing from the black wax cylinders of old Edison Dictaphones. Here, as elsewhere, was the giddy, fevered rushrushrush of the war-time effort, and soon enough I was sitting at a desk with Roberson and receiving my first instructions.

I was to go to Dallas for a few days of training.

"But I just came down from there," I blurted out, new to the inscrutable ways of The System.

"Well," said Roberson soothingly, "you can just go back up there on the train tonight. Ryan's up there now, and he and Tirey can show you some of the ropes."

All this time Roberson was filling out a travel voucher from a book of scrip which the railroads would accept in lieu of money, and asking me to sign for my new equipment. This consisted of an identification wallet, a forty-pound portable typewriter and a black leather loose-leaf pocket notebook. I telephoned Orianne to have an early dinner, and broke the news to her about my first assignment.

"I'm having to rough it in an upper berth," I said, carried away with the thought that anybody would want to purchase on my account bed-space on a Pullman.

So it was that, travelling at last in the style of my father, in the early dusk as the long train pulled out of the station, I found myself in the smoking-compartment, exchanging man-talk with some of the other passengers. After a decent interval, I left my companions-in-luxury and went forward to find my berth. I spurned the use of the foot-ladder which I knew I could have had at the ring of the porter's bell, and placing one foot on the chair-arm below and parting the green baize curtains, I vaulted into bed.

That afternoon, at a second-hand bookstore in the Quarter, I had bought a copy of *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, and after wrestling myself out of my clothes and into a clean pair of pajamas, I settled

down to read:

“The north-western corner of the vast plain which extends from the German ocean to the Ural mountains is occupied by the countries called the Netherlands. This small triangle —”

I did not read for long. The cadence of the prose, combined with the rumble and sway of the car, the feel of the cool white sheets and the soft narrow mattress, soon overcame me, and, happy as a cat in a quilted box, I flicked off the golden glow from my shaded reading-lamp and fell easily to sleep.

# # #

The eighteen months that followed May 1942, were all shaped by the same template. After a few days' training under Ryan, Our Man in Dallas, I went back to New Orleans, only to find myself sent out to San Antonio. I left Orianne behind me, she being busy with the move of our household goods to the new apartment and with a forced visit to Amarillo which I had fatuously decreed so as to assuage my own conscience about the commandeering of the new car.

In San Antonio, I found another romantic and picturesque metropolis, one which was just beginning to rise and bestir itself under the influence of the war fever. This was a place of old Spanish missions, some of them restored, some of them crumbling into yesterday. The Alamo stood just across the street from the Menger Hotel, in whose bar, so the legend ran, Teddy Roosevelt had recruited some of his Rough Riders. In this dry sunny climate, aviation flourished; Kelly Field was here, along with Ellington and a couple of others. These, combined with Ft. Sam Houston made San Antonio a serviceman's town, where the beer from the Pearl and Lone Star breweries was cheap and plentiful, and the climate ideal for the golf of retired generals. It was a true Southwestern town, more so than either Dallas or Ft. Worth, and so far as that goes, more cosmopolitan, with a large Mexican population and strong German and Czech influences.

All this was set down in the beautiful Texas Hill Country, on the edge of the Edwards Plateau. This was sheep and cattle raising territory, a land which was brown and parched in summer, but in Spring and Fall, misty-green with mesquite and chaparral, a land unlike most of the rest of Texas, watered by cool limestone-bedded streams.

In this atmosphere, early in June, I settled down frugally at the Y., and began trotting around town at the heels of an investigator named Wydick.

Wydick was what the 1950's would have dubbed a cool cat, a casual slender blond man who got on well with the local officials and who, it seemed to me, knew everybody in San Antonio. Since I was officially stationed in New Orleans, I was on constant mileage and per diem, and lived well within the depression-based allowance

of five dollars a day plus five cents a mile for the car. All this was denied to Wydick, who was in his home town, so I took him to and from work and around town in the gleaming Silver Streak and from him began to learn the art of investigation.

What we were investigating was the fitness — the job experience, the character, the morals, the background and the loyalty, of people who had applied for government jobs. Unlike myself, most of these folk were not checked into prior to appointment but had been hired on the spot, subject to investigation. The fact that by the time the Commission got around to their cases, some of them had been on defense jobs for a year or so, seemed to bother no one, neither the employing agency, the Civil Service Commission nor the applicant himself.

Armed with a description of the claimed residences and employments of the various applicants, and with an Itinerary Form No. 2650 scheduling three or four weeks in the field, the investigator solemnly set out on his travels. Jogging along at thirty-five miles an hour as prescribed by the national speed law, the investigator found himself nevertheless a true knight of the road or a prince rather, his windshield flaunting the coveted C sticker and his brief case stuffed with C coupons for unlimited gasoline; since he ate-out most of the time, he also found himself, when he circled back to home-base, with an embarrassment of riches insofar as coupons for sugar and meat were concerned.

Once at his destination, the investigator would go to the General Delivery window at the post office for his mail, bum a free city map from the Chamber of Commerce, and retire to his three dollar room at the Alamo Plaza Courts to make out his cards. These were index cards for each one of his calls, made up and properly arranged so as to avoid as much back-trailing as possible.

The next day, arrived at high school, factory, war plant, farm or dwelling-house, he would present his credentials and get down to business, interviewing employees, employers, supervisors, friends, enemies, neighbors, relatives — anybody who could tell anything pertinent about the applicant.

The art was a difficult one; we were coming up cold-turkey on the blind side of people, people who did not expect us, whose time we were taking up and who were busy in the rush and flutter of their war-time lives. Nevertheless, we took them as we found them, variously engaged, taking inventory, getting out last-minute reports, writing news stories, filling gas tanks, making love, darning socks, day-dreaming, night-dreaming, half-drunk, repairing airplane motors, tending bar or studying for final exams. We called willy-nilly on rich and poor, bum and banker, old and young, white and black,



foreigner and native, liberal and conservative, normal and neurotic, and the questions were almost always the same.

How long did he work here: do you know any other place where he's worked: has he ever been into any trouble: how much drinking does he do: how's his health: how about his moral character: does he gamble, take dope, chase little girls around the school yard, chase little boys around the school yard: how good was he at his job: why did he leave: was he fired or did he quit: would you re-hire him: and above all, has he shown any interest in any Nazi or Communist activity, and do you have any doubts about his loyalty to our country?

The best witnesses were, by and large, people who had been in an inferior but confidential position — bar-tenders, hair-dressers, yard-men, shoe-shine boys, barbers, or so far as that goes, ex-wives or jilted boy-friends. The worst witnesses tended to be such folk as ministers, doctors or lawyers, personal references, and friends of the family.

"Has that sweet lil' thang applied for a job with the gov'ment? Why, I've known her Daddy for forty years, long 'fore she was born. Yes sirree, she'll make you a real good hand. 'Course, I sort of lost touch with her, last few years, after she growed up and all, but her folks is the finest in the world."

"Yes, sir, he's a good old boy; don't come any finer than old Shep. You just put him somewheres like the Aleutians, Pearl Harbor, Guam, some place where there's no women and he can't get any liquor and *he'll* be all right."

"Oh no, sir, don't give *him* no government job. I'll tell you, the things he says 'bout our Pres-dent. No sir, he jest ain't loyal to our country — you ask me, I'd say he was a *Republican!*"

Occasionally we ran into incidents worthy of Rabelais or *Les Contes Drôlatiques* of Balzac:

"Well, yes sir, there *is* a question about his morals — it was about that time he was staying in this boarding house over on South Street Mary's; landlord had him a goat tethered out in the yard, and old Jimmy Dean come home drunk one night and decided he'd go out and bugger that goat. Well, the goat hollered out like he was bein' killed, and of course the landlord heard all this fuss and raised up with his old .22 and shot just above the goat, and hit ole Jimmy Dean in the ass. Didn't hurt him too much. Don't know why he was havin' to bother that goat, anyways — landlord had him a nice little fourteen-year-old daughter right there in the house all the time."

At its worst it was donkey work, drudgery, with the monotonous poring over courthouse records and the long hot hours of driving in automobiles that were not even allowed to dream of air-condition-

ing, the bumping along over sandy roads away to hell and gone out in the country, lost as a soul in Purgatory. ("Oh, he lives out there south of town on the old Alderson Place; it's on Route 1, you can't miss it.") At its worst then, it was that; at its best, it demanded all that you had, and more — the finesse of a diplomat, the intuition of a poet, the patience of a lace-maker and the constitution of a water-buffalo. As the investigation deepened, you began to see into the soul of the applicant, you began to see him in full color and in three dimensions, and at times I seemed to be back at my novel writing, as the life of this man, his dreams and fears, his hopes and secret pursuits blossomed before my eyes.

At the end of the day, the weary investigator returned to his lonely room, took a shower, strolled around the town square, and after a cafeteria dinner went through his cards for the next day or busied himself with his expense account.

There was little else to do, except window-shop for some of the treasure-trove which could still be un-earthed in the Texas or Louisiana out-back — white shirts, nylon stockings, alarm clocks, electric irons, hub caps, wire coat hangers, the standard brands of cigarettes, and good whisky purchased without a tie-in with Southern Comfort or Cuban rum. TV was still a gleam in the eyes of electronic engineers; the radio was jammed with "My Gal Sunday" and "The Cowboy Chapel of the Air"; and in the training-camp towns especially, the cinema consisted of horse operas, low-budget action films, and musicals featuring the thighs of Betty Grable.

The investigator then, was free to plan his own time and to plot his own destiny; he was judged solely on result. The interviewing work called for fast note-taking, and many of the reports, for rapid typing. I have already mentioned my handy if rudimentary shorthand, and my rapid if inaccurate typing: Here then, was a chance to work hard and succeed; and the Alger hero in me rose up, as the Sherwood Anderson hero declined; here I was, placed in a situation of authority, where I could dominate and yet was forced to please, a combination about which we shall have much to say later on; here, I could be my own, true, lone-wolf self, and I took it all in like a prisoner set free upon the seabanks and taking in life once more in great, healing gasps.

One particular aspect of our work for which I had little appetite, was the special hearing. Any applicant whose file was overloaded with falsehood, sin or crime, was given a sporting chance to clear himself. After being summoned from his job for an interview, he was presented with a nebulous, rambling summary of the evidence against him. These hearings, without benefit of counsel or confrontation of witnesses, had many of the unsavory aspects of the Old

Star Chamber trials in Merrie England or of a fishing expedition by the I.R.S., and I never grew fond of them. Generally the trembling wretch, like a step-father accused of statutory rape, either confessed, in which case he merely confirmed his guilt, or else denied everything, in which case he was taken for a liar.

I had but few of these hearings in any event, and have never discovered how many dismissals resulted from them nor from any of the information we collected at such prodigious pains and expense.

At any rate, here in San Antonio for a month or so. I was absorbed with my on-the-job training, and on the weekends loafed around town and kept up with my reading. Back in Dallas, my Production Control class was nearing its end, and although my attendance had long since fallen to zero, I kept on studying, and wrote to Professor Richelieu that I intended to take the finals. Carrying the textbook underneath my arm, one sun-drenched Sunday afternoon I strolled along the shady banks of the San Antonio River. This dark meandering stream, rock-terraced and beautifully landscaped, wound through town well below street level, and now I sat on the stone benches and studied a while and then got up and floated along through the crowds of dogs, servicemen, uninhibited Mexican lovers, tourists and Sunday-strollers. Paddle-boats drifted along the water; there was a scent of honeysuckle in the air and the sight of sunlight filtering through the magnolias along the riverside.

A week later I took the finals, typing away in the little hot room at the Y, without a glance at text or notes, and duly sent my paper in. In spite of my absence during the last month of the course, I received an A-minus for my pains, my mentor being either a man of charitable instincts or perhaps one who was being paid on a per capita basis.

Early in July, my loneliness was relieved by Orianne's arrival, and one hot afternoon she and I drove around town looking for a place to lay our heads and to catch up on our lovemaking, that activity being known to investigators as "the one thing you can get farther behind on and get caught up on quicker, than anything else in the world." We finally found a rooming house where we could be alone, and then after a week or so, I found myself posted back to New Orleans.

In the Crescent City, there was little time to enjoy the pleasures of the cosmopolis. I was on my own now, my apprenticeship was completed, and soon enough I was being handed long itineraries which took me out of town for weeks on end.

Most of the time Orianne, faithful as a setter, went with me. She was glad to be exploring new territory and the haps and chances of travel, standing long watches at the wheel, and in the matter of sex-

ual comfort, as the old quip of the investigators had it, "performing related work as required."

In the course of one of these trips, on November 1, 1942, Orianne and I found ourselves in Amarillo. It was a beautiful Sunday, clear and warm, and in the afternoon we headed south for Abilene. Dad and Mother decided to go with us as far as Canyon, so he rode with me in the Plymouth while the women followed in the other car. When it came time to part, in one of the more insane gestures of my life, I insisted that we trade automobiles, so that my parents rode back to Amarillo in the Pontiac while Orianne and I went on our way in the old Plymouth with its coughing engine and slick tires.

I was little concerned about the car, and still less concerned about my father, although as it turned out I had just seen him in his full and true mind for the last time. In the months that followed, Mother's letters about him grew more ominous, until finally in April 1943, I received the news that he was in the Santa Fe Hospital at Topeka, with symptoms that resembled those of paresis, and a case that was considered hopeless. He had suffered a series of strokes, and with his high blood pressure and hardening of the arteries, could never be expected to improve.

I was alone at this time, on a short itinerary in East Texas, and when I read the letter I was sitting in a booth in the City of Tyler waiting for my pants to be pressed. Crouching there without dignity in shorts and shirt, the letter in my hand, I broke down and wept, and that day or the next arranged for some leave and boarded a train for Topeka.

For some reason Mother was in Amarillo, but Dad was still at the hospital, and after checking in at the Y.M.C.A. I went over to see him. He was in a large airy room on the second floor, dressed as I had last seen him, in suit and tie, seated in a rocking chair and gazing placidly out the window.

I smothered my mounting anxiety as best I could and sat down with him, and we chatted for an hour or so about matters of little moment. I was enormously relieved to find him apparently as calm and rational as ever, and as we talked it grew dark. We did not turn on the lights in the room but sat in the dusk, looking at a beacon which shone from the top of the Capitol Building a few blocks away. Finally after an hour or so I got up to go.

"Well Loki," he said, "it's been fine to see you, I'm glad you could come by. I don't know what I'm doing here, really, I'm ready to return to Amarillo and go back to work. By the way, that light up there," he concluded, "that's a light that they shine into your soul, they can tell what you've done. I don't know why they're shining it at me, I've never done anything; I've never had relations with any-

body but your own mother, and still they shine that light at me. You know, I used to go out to El Paso for rate hearings, and after work we'd all go across the river to Juarez, and some of the other men would go into those houses, you know what kind of houses, but I never would. Now they keep me here and won't let me go back to work, even though there's nothing the matter with me; nothing at all."

There was nothing piteous or complaining about his voice or manner, but my heart was overwhelmed once more with grief, and I stumbled out of the room as best I could and went back to the Y.

I stayed around town a day or so, and learned that there was nothing much that anybody could do. One day we went out to the farm and roamed through the woods, through the oaks and the walnut trees and the tangle of buckbrush, and then pretty soon I packed up and went back to Texas.

During all this, and later, Mother's diaries continued to spell out the story:

"23 degrees; bad wind; Dad very sick with quick short breath, and Dr. Wyeth does not know what is the matter with him . . . Dad had temps all day. Looks like jaundice . . . Weak in knees, tried to go to office, went back to bed . . . Dad unsteady in head and spirits low, so low. Still thinks thyroid. Dad gave me big pink roses for Valentine's, says his love is like a rose; but he is not like himself in any way . . . Worries about cows in barn. Wets bed. Staggeres when he walks. Cannot sleep. Is lonesome, and cries for Loki."

Thus the diaries; and also, about this time, was penned the last letter that I had from my father. It is written on stationery of the Hotel Jayhawk in Topeka. The fine strong hand is gone forever, replaced by a scraggly idiot scrawl which must have been hard to make out even when it was still fresh. It is dated April 27, 1943, a week or so after my visit to him, and one notes along with the fear and confusion, the romantic association of sultry Latin countries with rum, sex and evil, and the wild, bitter and unique regrets of the virtuous:

"Saturday morning. April 27th. When does the execution take place? In Spain or Mexico I might have had a trial at my back but here I have had none (forget this). Why didn't someone tell me of what I am guilty. I have never been with anyone sexually except my own and only wife, is that the charge. I have not been either smuggling or drinking Mexican liquor. The morning birds are singing sweetly this morning. The execution has not yet taken place. Has been

postponed several times. They take place in the evenings. Slept good last night. The prisoner feels like he would 'eat a hearty breakfast.' Nine centuries from now the historical controversy about the birthplace of the . . . " The rest of the sentence is illegible, but the writer apparently realizing this, tries to make amends for it at the end. "I find I express myself but poorly."

Throughout all these time, and for the next few years, I re-lived the anxiety and torment of the long dreary stretch of Rick's illness; and the sequel, with which I shall deal in due time, may well be imagined.

Meanwhile all was not gloom, and the four or five months at least, which followed our departure from Amarillo continued to be happy or at least exciting ones.

One day late in November, in New Orleans, Roberson called me into his office.

"Well Loki," he said, extending his hand and then waving me to a chair, "I want to have a little chat with you. How'd you like to be stationed down along the Coast, some place where you can lie on the beach, soak up that sunshine, go swimming, fishing, every day? How'd you like to move down to Corpus Christi?"

I discovered later that this assignment was one which none of the other men wanted, and that I had been picked out as the sacrificial victim. However, like Capote's Holly Golightly who took up a proposal of marriage for the simple reason that she had never been married before — I had never been to Corpus Christi before, so I snapped at the chance and hurried home to bear the glad tidings to Orianne.

Instead of being overjoyed as I thought she would be, my gallant wife sat down on the sofa and burst into tears.

"We've just got our apartment fixed up the way I want it, and well, it's just too much —" she jumped up and paced the floor in rage, "it's just too much — I can't stand it — and I'm going right up there tomorrow and tell that Mr. Roberson just what I think of it — and of him!"

Needless to say, I quieted her down and she did not go to see Roberson; a day or so later, after sub-leasing our apartment, we threw a few things in the car and started out for Corpus Christi.

In spite of the sarcastic congratulations of my peers at the office, both Orianne and I, once arrived, found this little town far down on the southward curve of the Texas Coast to be a place of beauty and delight. Here I discovered myself once more in a culture that had in the past been wild and woolly and full of fleas, that had by now been broken and gentled, but that still cherished the memory of its

old outlaw days.

This fertile coastal plain, where the moist tropical winds seemed to blow night and day, was formerly the home of the stinking and gigantic Karankaways, cannibalistic Indians of the days of Cabeza de Vaca, pestilential hostile fellows who stank from the fetid oil smeared on their bodies to ward off mosquitoes, and who extended a less than Chamber-of-Commerce welcome to the early Spanish explorers.

They were long gone by now, and gone too were the early Mexican ranchers who grazed their longhorns on the tall rich prairie grasses, and the smugglers, outlaws and pirates who ducked in and out of the coves along the shore. The vaqueros and pastores were still about, rather their descendants were, as evidenced by the signs in the loan sharks' windows in Lower Broad Street, which held out the promise of "*Prestamos Dinero.*" They worked now usually at humble chores in the city, on the oil rigs or in the irrigated fields which extended all the way south to Brownsville.

In late 1942, things were looking up for Corpus, a town which boasted forty or fifty thousand inhabitants. This was the young bustling city which just a few years in the past had been scornfully characterized as an "ill-lighted, poorly paved, sandy and run-down tourist resort, with the balmy and cooling breeze of the South-East trade winds and the annual encampment of the Texas Epworth League as its chief points of inducement."

By 1942 though, the big, sprawling Naval Air Station out on Flour Bluff was just out of swaddling clothes, having been christened only a year previously by Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox. About that time also the new sea wall was completed along the lovely curving shoreline of Ocean Drive, not to mention the neat little yacht basin and the T-heads which had been built along the waterfront. All this and heaven too: As luck would have it, and at the very crack of opportunity, the harbor facilities had just been enlarged, and the new chemical plants and refineries, most of them constructed practically at the water's edge, smilingly announced themselves open and ready for business.

Orianne and I soon found a roosting-place at Peterson's Waterside Apartments. These were located on a street that flanked the old Breakers Hotel on North Beach, a relaxed and sand-blown suburb which lay immediately north of town across the old iron bascule bridge and on the road to Aransas Pass. This district, for all that it was given over to cheap motels, hamburger palaces, souvenir shops and beach houses, had nevertheless known its moments of history. Its flat sandy beaches had offered General Zachary Taylor a place to drill his troops for the Mexican campaign; here, too, officers

Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis had seen service, along with Ulysses S. Grant, who had distinguished himself by falling into the bay from a troopship and by playing Desdemona in an all-male cast of *Othello*.

Now at Peterson's we found ourselves on the ground-floor of a two-story, white-frame apartment building. We could sit for hours on our tiny veranda watching the big oil tankers heading out into Corpus Christi Bay, bound for Liverpool or Murmansk, and around them, the jazzy, squawking, two-toned seagulls slanting into the wind, and the brown pelicans swooping and diving for fish. Here too droned the big seaplanes, the Navy PBY's, the patrol bombers on their practice runs, seeming to fly at about the same speed as the pelicans, their twin props stirring up the tepid Gulf air like wooden paddle-fans in a country drug store.

For decades I had dreamed of living on the sea, and now at last I was doing it, howbeit on a shallow bay that was sheltered from heavy surf by Mustang Island a few leagues to the East. Our front door led directly onto a sandy road, and a hundred yards or so away was the beach. Thither on our first evening in residence, barefooted and in bathing trunks, I ran yelping, as who should cry out "Thalassa! Thalassa!" after the fashion of Xenophon's Greeks; ran yelping into the surf then, only to cut my feet to ribbons on the sharp stones that lay beneath the shallow water. For the next few days I went limping around town with bandaged feet, wearing my Japanese slippers and a sheepish smile.

Here at North Beach then, we settled down, with our portable washing machine and our Magnavox table-model, a 78 r.p.m. record player which Rink Eppler had sold me out of Martine's stock at a discount. ("You don't work here, but after all you're the boss' son-in-law and we'll just knock off twenty percent.")

Here also Orianne displayed her cooking skill to many a hungry and tuckered-out investigator, sick at heart and stomach from the chicken-fried-steak culture of the Southwest.

Here at one time or another came Roberson and his assistant Weybright, a hawk-nosed young man of starched white collars and an efficient manner, the terror of indolent investigators. Here also, we entertained my good friend and fellow investigator Rod Bentzen.

Rod was a stout balding black-jowled man in his late twenties, the possessor of a gourmet's palate and of a master's degree in English from the University of Oklahoma. He was a life-lover, with a ribald wit, an explosive laugh and a taste for books and music.

"Jesus Christ! Here's a *Bowdler Shakespeare!*" he called out once from the murky depths of a New Orleans second-hand bookstore, and bought the volume on the spot for forty cents. He was a



Spenserian scholar, and from him I learned to appreciate not only the works of the great Elizabethan, but as well the diverting if suicidal practice of reading while driving an automobile.

"It's all in the rhythm, the controlled eye-blink. The sonnets are the easiest, you can use them to train on. After that, you can read essays, fiction, what the hell, anything short of *Finnegan's Wake*. "See here," and he snatched up the green-bound copy of Spenser which I had bought when he had acquired his *Bowdler*. "see here — you start with, 'The merry Cuckow, messenger of Spring/ His trompet shrill hath thrise already sounded' — then, when you get down to, 'That all the woods theyr musick back resounded/ As if they knew the meaning of theyr lays' it's time to look up — and hope you don't find yourself staring into the radiator of a Mack truck. Then you go ahead and finish out the other six lines — and if you're still alive, you're ready to look up again."

I might be reading Spenser in our living-room then, or putting on some of our records, Rachmaninoff or Lalo, Chopin or George Gershwin, while Rod and Orianne would be out in the little hot kitchen. They would be shouting each other down over the best way to prepare shrimp Remoulade or oysters Rockefeller, their palaver somewhat tempered by the tacit assumption that a life without garlic bread and freshly-ground horse radish was a life not worth living.

In later years Rod's brashness, his abrasive qualities and jeering wore me down, and probably some of my less than darling qualities revolted him; but for several years we were the best of friends and together downed full many a nipperkin.

From Corpus Christi, once or twice my itineraries led me into the Rio Grande Valley. Here we drove through the little valley towns, Mission, Pharr and McAllen, San Benito and Mercedes, where the palm trees along the irrigation canals seemed like friezes from the tombs of Egyptian kings, and where the air from the grapefruit processing plants smelled like syrup being rendered over a wood-burning stove.

Here, as in Goethe's "Mignon," the citrus trees gleamed with fruit and at harvest time the roads were lined with oranges which had fallen from the trucks of the pickers. We merrily scooped up this bonanza and, laughing like treasure-seekers, threw it into the back of the car for later consumption.

One week-end we came into Brownsville, and on a Sunday noon drove across the International Bridge and into Matamoros. Here for the first time in my life I found myself in Old Mexico, and on my way to a bull-fight at that. All of Hemingway, of *The Sun Also Rises* and of *Death in the Afternoon*, came up all around me like a ground fog, and I viewed the land, on this side of the border, parched,

brown and blown with trash, with mounting excitement. At the bullring itself, what with the *paso doble*, the swords, the capes and the blood, I was drunk more on excitement than on my bottle or two of Carta Blanca; and when, coming outside afterwards, I saw a small brown man in sandals and serape, with sombrero pushed back from his forehead, relieving himself against an adobe hut, my happiness knew no bounds.

A few days later, I took half a week's leave and we drove on down to Monterrey and Saltillo, where in earnest I began my love affair with Mexico which has not abated to this day, for all that our radiator boiled in the high mountain air and my stomach on the fiery food.

Meanwhile, brave men were dying, drowning in the Coral Sea or being stitched by machine gun fire in North Africa, as I vacationed in Mexico, or scoured the countryside to check out the rumor that Manuel Gonzales, (Carpenter's Helper, Pearl Harbor) was a woman-chaser and a smuggler of tequila, or that Debra Faye Terwilliger (Junior Censorship Clerk, San Antonio) had been observed in a compromising position with her geometry teacher during the 1938 Senior Class Picnic on Padre Island.

So the mild coastal winter wore on, and in the Spring we were transferred back to New Orleans, and not long thereafter, together with the entire office of the Tenth Region, on to Dallas, Texas. From the glamor and tradition of the Old Custom House, our HQ now was at 211 South Harwood, half a block from my old stomping grounds at the City Hall, and in a three-story building of dung-colored brick, with all the distinction and splendor of the average municipal power plant.

Now in the middle of 1943, after a year and half of war, the housing crunch was really on; civilian construction had ground to a halt long ago, and people had been pouring into the Dallas region for months to work at the new war plants, at North American in Grand Prairie and elsewhere. Failing to find an apartment, Orianne and I moved into a rooming house in University Park, and coolly stored our furniture in Martine's piano warehouse, where it was to stay for a longer period than ever we dreamed. I was neither depressed nor elated by this Return of the Native, although to be sure it had in it some of the aspects of the saga of the culture-god or folk-hero — The Departure; the Initiation; the Ordeal; and the Return. Missing were only Death and Transfiguration, but surely those could wait till later. In any case, my thoughts were not on such matters, but rather upon Dad's illness and upon the Selective Service System whose hot breath, later in the year, I began to feel on the back of my neck.

Two or three years before, with the inception of the draft, Bick Ernstrom had got himself posted as an appeals agent, a lawyer appointed to serve without pay for any draftee who was too unhappy about his classification, and I had tagged along at his heels as an unofficial associate. As such, I sat in with a draft board which met in the Highland Park Shopping Center. It was light but interesting work, and I took care of an appeal here and there as the need arose. When my own need arose, I knew what to do, and sometime late in 1942, finding myself classified 1-A, promptly filed my own appeal and sat down to wait.

"I consider that I have done enough," I stated simply, after detailing all my efforts to serve, and there the matter had lain for almost a year. By January 1944, I would have been home free; in that month, all Civil Service investigators of a certain age, tenure and efficiency rating were declared exempt, but just two months before that, in November 1943, my tail was finally caught in the crack, my appeal was rejected and I was ordered up for active duty.

Once more I found myself being examined for military service, but this time in Dallas rather than in New Orleans, and this time far less critically than before.

"One doctor," so the saying went, "looks in your mouth and the other up your ass-hole; if they find they can't see each other, they'll say you're OK," and so it was in my case. As a final irony I was examined for emotional stability by Dr. Spike Angrist who, with God knows what secret reservations but probably a certain grim satisfaction, certified me as fit. A week or so later at the induction center, I was sworn in as Apprentice Seaman in the United States Navy.

The night before I was to entrain, Orianne and I went downtown to a show. It happened to be *Sahara*, an old romantic war-film starring Humphrey Bogart, but about halfway through, it suddenly came to both of us that this was no war film, this was real, this was earnest; and we clutched each other's hands and went solemnly home and to bed without saying much to each other.

The next morning about forty of us were mustered downtown, lined up in some sort of order, and addressed by an old sea-dog, a spruce and valiant C.P.O., a re-tread from World War I:

"Well, you're in the Navy now. You don't know where you're going — but you will, just as soon as you get on that train and Mr. Tay here opens your orders. I'm putting him in charge." At this he walked up to me and thrust a large brown manila envelope into my hands. "Yes, putting him in charge — you do what he says. And thank you, gentlemen," he concluded, in a memorable act of high courtesy, "thank you for coming into the Navy at a time when your

services were so badly needed."

Orianne was on hand of course, for the departure, standing off to one side in a group of "other little Navy wives," on the second floor of the Union Terminal. This was a gloomy cavernous hall, where steam radiators hissed, sandwiched in between the high-backed mahogany benches. A week or so before, Orianne had got a job on the assembly line at Kroehler's, hammering and gluing together the plywood training planes which it was hoped, would stay together once they were air-borne, and working the night shift "so I won't get so lonesome." Now, she showed up in a handsome if home-made suit of heather-colored wool and in the civet-coat which was still going strong after three years of college and five years of matrimony.

"You sure have got a big old lady," one of the boys commented to me as we all trooped downstairs to the train sheds, and I looked at her and then at myself and the others, and saw that of my group I was indeed the Old Man of the Sea. Most of my shipmates were high school kids, away from home for the first time, lithe and brown-haired, feisty young colts, pushing each other around and laughing.

True, they were not all light-hearted. As one of them remarked to me later in the day, "Well, they ought to take all the old guys like you and make you fight these god-dam' wars — leave us kids at home to grow up — Hell, you've lived *your* life —" and I felt the weight of my thirty-five years upon me.

Now, we all climbed aboard two Pullman cars on the west-bound T. and P., and it needed no ghost come from the grave to tell Orianne that we were headed for the Naval Training Station at San Diego.

With the savvy gained from my course in industrial management, I selected as my second-in-command a burly deputy sheriff from McKinney and put him in charge of the second car. And so one bright cold morning in late November 1943, we all went to war.

"This morning, I got ready to go," my officer-of-the-deck told me as we rolled out of the station, "got ready to go, and I had my suitcase in my hand. I kissed my wife good-bye, and she says, 'Aren't you going to kiss the baby, too?' So, I went in and kissed the baby like she said, and held him up a little and then put him down, and went back to the door and picked up that suitcase again, and that son of a bitch weighed a thousand pounds."

# # #

The United States Naval Training Station at San Diego I found to be a pleasant conglomerate of Mission-style buildings with red tile roofs and white stucco walls. Here in the mild sun-drenched atmosphere of Southern California, the paved streets and walkways ran between manicured lawns and flower-beds, and tucked in amongst the camps was a nine-hole golf course.

My contingent had arrived in Los Angeles early in the morning, and after a breakfast at the Harvey House and a change of trains, had come south along the hundred-odd miles of coast line to San Diego.

We had been driven out to the training station by Navy bus, and on dismounting and being marched along, found ourselves greeted by cat-calls and cries of "You'll be saw-ree!" by scattered groups of men in uniform.

Now, some seventy-five or a hundred of us were chivvied into a vast gymnasium where we stripped and showered and afterwards were grouped around a young, hard-talking petty officer clad in what I would learn to recognize as undress blues.

"Well, men, you're in the Navy now," he said, in the style of Sergeant Quirt and using a phrase which I had already begun to loathe. "Yessir, in the Navy now, and first thing you got to learn is the things you ain't allowed to have. All right, then — you got any pets, you just bring them out and put them right here on the deck. OK, so some of you think that's funny — kid shows up here last week, kid from Florida — he's brought his pet alligator with him — they bring puppies, skunks, rabbits, God knows what." (I could envision the scared homesick younker from Muleshoe, Texas, plucking his baby jackrabbit from the hutch on the way out of the yard and into the pickup.) "Another thing — you got any knives, just send them home with your civvies — that's your civilian clothes — and any guns the same way — Navy's gonna give you all the guns *you'll* ever need. An' another thing, you look in your billfold, you got any pornographic pitchers, you throw them here on this pile. You got a pitcher your mom, sis or girl friend, that's all right, but you got a pitcher like some of these boys carry, of a woman without any clothes on, that's pornographic and the Navy don't allow it. All

right. Something else, you got any medicine, prescriptions, laxatives, anything like that, you throw them down right here, too — just like it's got guns, the Navy's got doctors —" (God, was I to find out, did they ever have doctors) — "The Navy doctors will give you all the pills and other stuff you need. And, the last thing, you got any chewing gum, you throw it away right now — we allowed chewing gum, you wouldn't be able to put your foot down on this base, anywhere — and the wrappers —."

We all showered down, casting down our golden crowns around the glassy sea, and I speculated on who went through the pile later on, and if everything that we had discarded eventually reached the trash heaps; also, I wondered what your decision was supposed to be if Sis or even Mom herself had slipped you a pose of herself in the altogether on the old tiger-skin lest auld acquaintance be forgot.

Following all this, we were issued clothes and gear, a hammock of white canvas, blankets, sheets, towels and a pillow, along with black high-topped shoes like those favored by aging policemen. We also got a set of dress and of undress blues, dungarees, a black knit watch-cap and a heavy turtleneck sweater. Thrown in with all these was a pair of yellow canvas leggings, from which Boot Camp got its name, and then we were marched to the barber shop and were shorn like Sampson for our boot haircuts.

Long after dusk, we bedded down on the second floor of a long barracks building, with our clothes and gear all around us and our white ditty bags stencilled 43-505 lashed to our bed-posts.

A bugle sounded Taps; lights were turned off; and the cool, velvet, tropical night closed around us.

"This building's guarded and there's guards at the gates everywhere, so don't try anything funny," said a lithe tanned athletic young petty officer whom we were to get to know better in the days to come, and I fell into my bunk and into my first night as an Apprentice Seaman in the United States Navy.

It was dark when we turned in, and still dark at four-thirty the next morning when we turned out. After chow, our company commander, a short, square-jawed C.P.O. named Malvo, got us into a scraggly formation and, facing us, began to shuffle through some cards.

"Is there anybody here who can type?" he asked, in the born-to-command tones of a high school line coach, and I stepped one pace smartly forward with the Jack-Armstrong air of one volunteering to parachute at dusk into the Japanese GHQ.

"I can," I said. (We had not yet learned to salute or to say "Sir.")

"What did you do in civil life?"

"I was a lawyer, and then an investigator for the Civil Service

Commission."

"There's my yeoman," said Malvo happily, turning to his second-in-command, and then picked out a couple of big, older men for his boatswain's mates. We were made "Square-Knot Admirals" on the spot, and issued play-pretty ratings, mine being that of the yeoman, or "ball-bearing WAVE," two goose quills azure, saltire upon a field argent. For the first week or so, I naïvely assumed that these were the real thing; "You go up fast in this man's Navy," I proudly wrote to my wife and to Mother, in the meanwhile busying myself with Station, Watch and Quarters bills, with payrolls, and with answering the telephone in the little company office.

Our barracks fronted on the grinder, a paved area as big as a polo field, and here my shipmates drilled and did calisthenics while I watched from an upstairs window or wheeled regally about the base on the company bicycle. Just catty-corner from us stood Building 93, "The Nut House" or psychiatric ward, to which members of the company, in the spirit of soldiers referring to "Section Eight," condemned each other from time to time in jest. A full military band in uniform played for the drill, which was done by the numbers, in cadence and with old Springfield rifles, and general orders came through a loudspeaker preceded by the salty command to "Now hear this!"

Along with the other members of the company, I got my shots and studied the hornbook elements of Navy lore in *The Bluejacket's Manual*. In the course of our training we learned to tie a few knots, had one gun-loading drill, were given a lecture on poison gas, and learned some of the Morse and semaphore codes, or at least what they were, took swimming tests, and had our teeth worked on by pharmacist's mates all of whom had apparently been previously apprenticed to blacksmiths.

The food was good and plentiful, and the sun shone every day; we grew lean-bellied and tanned and took on something of a sea-going gait and swagger. Our period of training was scheduled at two months and my company served out its time, but every now and then a battle-wagon or carrier would swing in to anchor out in the harbor and scoop up entire companies-in-training, men who had had their shots and had learned to salute, and after taking on stores and supplies, head back out to sea in the general direction of Japan.

After three weeks we were released on our first liberty, but not before being exposed to a training film on the perils of V.D.

"Best way to avoid it — just keep away from Those Women altogether," said the officer in charge, adding, in a glorious non sequitur, "of course, with your married men, that's different — you *got* to have it — but you young kids don't, and that's that. Just remember

anyway, get some rubbers, and even then, head for the pro station first thing afterwards."

This was by no means our first training film. Before this, we had viewed one on survival at sea which had been made under the direction of Philip Wylie, and a full length feature entitled *The Battle of Russia*. Here, the Russians were depicted as our noble allies, as a people who for centuries had fought for freedom and justice and against the forces of dictatorship and oppression. Such embarrassing minor incidents as the Russo-German pact of recent memory and the liquidations under Stalin were swept under the rug and never mentioned.

So we went out, for the first time in twenty-one days freed from our yellow "boots," our low-cuts polished, and our white stripes scrubbed clean with soap and toothbrush. With dress blues, and our black neckerchiefs (in memory of the death of Lord Nelson), still un-tailored, we passed inspection at the gate, hopped a city bus and rode into town.

Some of us old mates drank beer, but the younger ones found their I.D. cards inspected and could be viewed mournfully consuming malted milks in hamburger joints. The town was aswarm with uniforms of all the services, and with two or three other stout fellows I sat down to a good meal somewhere and then bought a ticket for one of the burlesque shows.

Later on, as I rode back to the base, a lovely slender dark-haired woman in apple-green chiffon and a big cartwheel hat, got on the bus, and I left my seat and went up and dumbly sat by her (did I have the wild hope that perhaps she would turn out to be One of Those Women?) — sat by her then, just to smell a woman again, to savor the perfume and the woman-scent once more, sitting there as Mother would have said, like a bump on a log, wanting to touch her, wanting to tell her — what? — but no matter; and presently she got off the bus, and then in turn I too and wandered back to the barracks alone.

This was my first leave, and later on there were a couple of others, one especially on Christmas Eve in which I got high on beer and then wandered around Ramona's Home, and coming back to the base, found a big Christmas tree alight on the grinder and the "Now-hear-this" loudspeaker carolling out "Silent Night." All the men, dark shapes walking across the asphalt, were singing along with the music.

"Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;  
And beauty came like the setting sun:  
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror  
Drifted away . . . O, but Everyone



Was a bird; and the song was wordless; the singing will never be done."

I thought of Siegfried Sassoon's poetry as I went to bed, and the next day after a fabulous repast sat outside in the sunshine and enjoyed a good cigar. After a while I went upstairs and wrote a letter describing the peaceful scene to Henry Nash Smith. Henry was a scholar of note, a former Dallas resident with whom I had kept up a desultory correspondence, and he replied some time later, noting that withal I had sounded like Marcus Aurelius writing from a camp in Cisalpine Gaul. As a matter of fact, some of the Emperor's *Meditations* may have crept into my writing: "If thou workest at that which is before thee — without allowing anything else to distract thee —"; and also, with some sort of prophetic insight. "The art of life is more like the wrestler's than that of the dancer's, in respect of this, that it should stand ready and firm to meet onsets which are sudden and unexpected."

Well, with all that, after Christmas came a spell of rainy weather. Some of us were still heated up from our shots, and what with our drilling and running around in the rain and going without sleep, a catarrhal ailment, "cat fever," hit the entire base, and soon half our company was coughing and blowing at a fearful rate. I had already been through classification and had come out with the highest intelligence test in the company, but for all that was humbly bucking for Signalman's School although I had an off-chance to get into Classification instead.

"I've done work like this," I said to the interviewer, "and have dealt with the public and in the classification of jobs; I could do this same thing that you're doing." While I was sweating out the school, waiting for the good news, I came down with the fever. Never have I had such an ailment — it had integrity, depth and staying power — bottom, as the horsemen say — and I was still hacking from it six months later. So, before my company-term was up, I checked into Sick Bay, and while still there, found to my great glee that I had been posted to Classification School at Camp Farragut, Idaho.

For all my joy, I was shaken with fear; could I get up out of that bunk and make it to the train? I would have risen from the dead; I drank water like a dehydrated camel; I dosed myself with illegally possessed aspirin; I managed somehow with the help of a couple of other mates to get my gear lashed up and onto the truck, and from thence on board a train bound for Portland, Oregon.

It was the eleventh of the month, but the month was January and not February; for all that, in my delirium I thought that it was, instead, my birthday, and all day long kept repeating to myself, "This is a great birthday, really, a hell of a fine birthday."

Before leaving the base, I had got off an enigmatic telegram to Orianne, telling her of my departure but not of my destination, that being forbidden by Navy Reg., and now all afternoon rode through the melted-butter sunshine, past orchards, vineyards and sudden vistas of white surf on the beaches.

The next morning, after a change of trains in Portland, and finding myself laughed at for my white hat, here where the other sailors were sporting their blue flat-tops, we went through the Rockies in the dead of winter, in a journey that was as romantic and haunting as the train trip in the film *Dr. Zhivago*. With one locomotive in front and another behind, we threaded our way through snowfilled gorges rich with stands of fir and pine; I had a fever which must have been around 104, and this heightened the dream-like quality of the journey. I was going to a new and fabulous land; in a few days Orianne would be there to join me; she would buy a trailer, and in its foetal enclosure we would cozy-up and somehow, forget the war.

— — —

The Indians had called it Fever Valley. Here, not far from Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, less than a hundred miles from the Canadian border and about half that east of Spokane, Washington, the Government had slipped into bed with the virgin wilderness and had conceived Camp Farragut.

Shivering, with our Southern California blood not yet acclimated to the cold, we got off the railroad and were hauled to camp in a gray Navy bus driven by a member of what I later learned to call Ship's Company. After passing through the gates, we dismounted and were dumped with all our gear in front of a vast, wooden gymnasium big enough for indoor soccer.

At this base, all the buildings were new and of wood, painted Navy gray. We were on a valley floor here, and lovely dark green mountains hovered all around, clad in white mantillas of snow. The mists hung over the valley, giving tremendous scenic effects and also imprisoning the odors of cooking from the mess halls and the hopes of chilly men.

After spending our first night in the gym, we were led to our barracks, where we found the familiar double-deck bunks, and here once more we unlashd our gear and made our beds, all ship-shape and Bristol-fashion.

Outside, the ground froze at night and un-froze by day, and the mud lay everywhere. Duck-walks led into the buildings, and we wore our rubber overshoes all the time. Here, there were no clipped hedges or flower beds and one needs hardly add, no golf course.

At my former post, I had heard San Diego called Dago, and the asshole of the world; here, too. I soon heard that Farragut enjoyed that anal distinction also, as did, probably during this time, every other armed services installation on the face of the earth.

An ominous quiet lay over the barracks: everybody was away on liberty for the weekend. "Just wait till tonight, when they all get back," somebody said: and surely enough, later on, the barracks filled up with half-drunk, jostling young men, all of them students in one or the other of the Navy schools.

Our Specialist Classification School began at eight o'clock the next morning. There were forty or fifty students, mostly former lawyers, C.P.A.'s, office managers or personnel directors, many of us gray-haired old men in our mid-thirties and already beginning to break ground for jowls and paunches. We found that we did not have to pull K.P. or guard duty or make formations, and that the school was to last eight weeks.

Our officer-teachers were mostly professors who had been but newly dragged from chairs of philosophy, education or psychology in various colleges or schools of business administration. They were informed pleasant chaps of about our own age, and under them we began to study. Our job was to be the classification and assignment of enlisted personnel into Navy jobs and rates, and to this end we delved into such matters as personnel interviewing, civilian job analysis, qualifications for Navy rates, personality and psychological tests, and even a smattering of psychology itself. ("How do you tell if a man is neurotic — if he's so busy running himself that he doesn't have time to run anything else, then he's neurotic, and sooner or later the Navy will find that it doesn't want him.")

Our texts included the *D.O.T., The Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, efficient looking octavo volumes bound in red leatherette and containing thousands of job descriptions and titles from civilian life.

All of us were geared into Academia, its machinery and ethos, and we took to the work without too much trouble. I strove hard, both in class and out, clawing as always for status and recognition, but with, at first, indifferent results.

"Those funny remarks you got off in Boot Camp just aren't going over, up here," was the helpful suggestion offered by one of my classmates, and I was looked upon as the class bore until I finally achieved a breakthrough.

One morning our regular professor, Lieutenant Marsden, late of the University of Washington, failed to appear and instead his place on the platform was taken by his second-in-command, a C.P.O. named Leggett.

"The Lieutenant is confined to Sick Bay for a couple of days,"

our substitute teacher informed us, and I, reaching back to the memory of a wise-crack attributed to Alexander Woolcott, came back with, "Well, I certainly hope it's nothing trivial."

There was a moment's pause for the joke, if that is was, to sink in, and then the class was dissolved in mirth and crude guffaws, which continued for a full ten minutes.

Thereafter, perhaps with more insight than it realized, the class dubbed me "Trivial" Tay for the remainder of my stay at Camp Farragut. Well, nothing succeeds like success; and I noted with a certain amount of cynicism that my little sallies into the realm of humor were now received at least with respect, and I found my company sought after by a few other choice precious souls around the malted milk bar in the Post Exchange.

Well, the recital of one's alleged witticisms is fatuous and makes usually for painful reading. Looking back on it now, it would seem that the class must have been as hard up for wit as I was for prestige; but enough of this.

Yes, so much for achievement and status, on however minor a scale; but elsewhere, beneath the surface, other matters were stirring. More and more now, I began to notice the noise in the barracks, the roistering young gunner's mates and other studs crashing about, and one day, during my first week, I found myself alone in the building, seated on my bunk at the noon hour and reading a letter from home. As we had planned, Orianne had quit her job in Dallas and was due to arrive in nearby Coeur d'Alene in a few days. I read the letter, whose contents contained really no surprises to me, and then was suddenly bowed over by a fit of weeping. I sat and cried for half an hour, and then wandered back to class, with the old familiar lost-in-outer-space feeling strong upon me, and added to it, an unaccountable, jarring wrath at my bunk-mates. Thinking of their noise and witless profanity, I thought and then said aloud again and again, "These are not the fine fighting men of our nation — not that at all, but rather bastard peasants who deserve to die," and so, still mumbling to myself, went back to class and the *D. O. T.*

To this storm-warning I paid no heed, and that weekend went into the little nearby liberty-town of Coeur d'Alene to meet my wife. She met me at the bus station and led me through the chilly quiet town to the second floor of a modest brown-shingled house on a street lined with snowbanks and towering spruce trees.

Here we dug in and here we spent the next six or seven weekends until my course was over. From here, Orianne went out during the day as a housekeeper and maid to a family that had children, so as to have something to do and a domestic atmosphere that I could

come home to. Here, the husband was a lawyer, and one evening they had us both to dinner, and here we all ate and talked as equals, and afterwards my wife and I went back to the kitchen where I helped her with the dishes, both of us giggling, and feeling like White Russian refugee nobility in the Paris of the 1920's.

At the end of the course, in mid-March, our class held its graduating exercises. I ranked seventh, and as such was posted for a rating, along with a dozen or so others. From Seaman, we rose to Third Class Petty Officer, and as such our salaries soared up from seventy-eight to nearly ninety dollars a month. We were now eligible to wear the "crow," the eagle insignia with the single red chevron, and the newly created large C which stood for Classification, and which some old-timers, not always without malice, sometimes pretended to mistake for Cook.

Since then, I have received honors with as much but not any more pleasure, and lost no time in scurrying around to the military tailor to have the white watch-stripe removed from my blues and the new insignia sewed on.

Well, glory and envy are two of the rewards of achievement, and soon enough I was to know both of them. Out of all my class, one Paddy O'Connor, a brash extrovert of the type known on the base as a "Chicago boy," took an intense dislike to me, which was only intensified when my name appeared on the list of newly created rates and his was absent. Seeing me getting ready to turn in one night after Taps, and probably having observed my preening before the mirror like a call-girl in a powder-room, he jibed, "Well now, Tay — getting ready to put the crow to bed?" I did not reply to him, but crawled into my bunk, and lying there sleepless, with the tension and fatigue and God knows what else gnawing at me, found myself for the first time plotting ways to kill a man. (He was apparently another "bastard peasant who deserved to die.") To kill him then, and the passion and the guilt and shame of it broke over me like a surf, and along with it, perhaps the disappointment to learn that such bitterly-won success should have to bear such bitter fruit.

The next day was Sunday, and another mate and I took a long walk which ended somehow at a chapel on the base, where I stood outside in the snow, on some sort of pilgrimage it seemed, and at the end of the walk I felt somehow purged, at least for the time being.

The next day I boarded the train and headed back to San Diego, my new post of duty. Orianne left Idaho at about the same time, planning to pick up our car in Dallas and to drive it out to California. With all this, O'Connor faded from both my sight and mind, for all that I had planned to strangle him as he slept. I was dismayed a

week or so later to discover that somehow we had switched neckerchiefs in the dark, and have since wondered just what happened, just what somnambulistic half-murders were committed during my last night at Camp Farragut.

Arrived at San Diego, I was of course stationed on the base, but this time in less demeaning company, and this time in the Selection Office, on the giving, rather than on the receiving side of the desk. We sat, about forty of us, at long tables in U-formation in a big airy room. Each of us lounged in his own little carrel, like those in the credit office of a big department store, facing, on the other side of the table, the weary crop-headed recruit whose fate lay pulsing in our hands.

"Hi, mate, How's it going? The smoking lamp is lit"; and we would shove an ashtray forward, in a calculated effort to make our man feel at home.

Later on, after getting his employment, family and personal history, we would ask him what he wanted to do in the service. For some reason, Aviation Machinist's Mate was considered very chic at this time and was much favored by farm boys who had enjoyed some experience at tinkering on old jalopies or on Dad's tractor. Our daily assignment might well contain openings for four or five such ratings and perhaps two hundred for medical corpsmen.

"Hmmm. Afraid that's all filled up. How'd you like to get into the medics?"

"I dunno, Never thought much of it. Sight of blood makes me sick to my stummick."

"Well, I'll see what I can do. Thanks a lot mate, and good luck."  
(In the medics.)

In Idaho, Orianne had planned to join me here, and in due time she arrived, driving the Plymouth with its wafer-thin tires over the desert sands in company with Snookie Dawson whose man also was stationed in Dago. At the girls' arrival, we all made happy sex in two separate rooms of the U.S. Grant Hotel, closing the transoms so as not to disturb the few other guests who might not be similarly employed.

My wife found a rooming house where we could set up some sort of home, and, a regular eight-to-five commando, I began my routine, going to the office in the morning and coming back to the house in late afternoon. By merely walking in the door, Orianne with her mechanical-drawing experience and her ability to read blueprints, got a job with Ryan Aircraft, and there I was with my fine shore-base set-up.

"Having your wife along sure as hell takes the edge off the war," somebody had commented enviously in Coeur d'Alene. Yes, all this

and nookie, too; and then one day, my chief called me into his office and after acknowledging my salute, waved me to a chair. I had been in his office two weeks before, asking for leave to go up to Los Angeles for a few days. Orianne had not yet arrived, and I was beat to the socks; I had planned, in all innocence, to stay with Nora Brandon, for all that she had a new baby, and for all that John, my good friend from old Amarillo days, was long since gone overseas with the Marines. My request had been denied curtly enough, and now I was back, but at his order.

"Well, Tay, just wanted to tell you that they're shipping some of you out — going up to San Francisco where they need some classification men. Better get ready to lash up and ship out in a few days. Just thought I'd let you know."

He would just let me know, would he? I got up, flung a farewell salute at him and stumbled out into the sunshine.

San Francisco; along with New Orleans and New York, one of the great cities, the land of Lafcadio Hearn, Robert Louis Stevenson and Jack London. And ah, Carmel-by-the-Sea — but I could not flog my imagination into taking it all in; no, once more, I had had it, and for several hours I wandered around in a daze, but not around the Naval Training Station at San Diego. No, I was on Hayden Street again, out in the Wolflin Addition, with the hot prairie wind rustling the Johnson grass, and Dee had just told me to report next day at the new job down on *Buck-anan* Street; no, I was in Monticello, Maine, up in Grampie's attic, weeping to be back on the farm in Topeka — and so it was that I finally drifted over to Sick Bay, duly reported, and stood in line for treatment.

"I've got this pain — right here — this pain," I said, and doubled over, holding both arms over my gut, doubled up with pain and with the wild and uncontrollable weeping that shook my frame. I stood there with the astonished sailors all around me. "Right here —," I said, and tried to talk, but all the time, the medic was writing, writing, and soon enough handed a piece of paper to an assistant who stood nearby.

This mate now took me and steered me, with a gentle but demanding hold on my elbow, down the corridor and out into the sunshine, making the little clucking sympathetic noises that one might use while grooming a large calm but potentially dangerous animal, "Here, mate, just come along with me; here we are, steady as she goes," and all the while, still clucking and steering, led me toward Building 93.

# # #

Out on the hill, beneath the big pines it was very pleasant. I could lie on the deep, emerald-colored grass for hours, read *The Oxford Book of Light Verse*, watch the airplanes in the sky or listen to the mournful hooting of the little yellow trolley as it wound down the hill toward San Diego. Yes, it was satisfying, even though when darkness fell, I checked in with the nurse at the desk and was locked up in the psycho ward.

I had been here three weeks now, in the not very tight but still happy ship of the Naval Hospital at Balboa Park. Building 93 and the Naval Training Station were far away and long ago. While still there, I had continued my hysterical compulsive weeping, and although I had written my chief in the Selection Office that I wanted to come back "after a few days' rest," I had nevertheless, after another day or so, been brought out to the hospital by ambulance and locked up in a ward with barred windows and with sliding steel gates at the end of the hall.

I could not bring myself to speak to anyone, and no one spoke to me. On the ward it was very quiet, and I gathered that most of the men had been sent here on account of seasickness. I was on the second deck of another Mission-style building, one which was built around a large compound, with outside railed balconies running all the way around.

For the first few days I did nothing but lie on the bunk and think about Rick and Dad, and cry. At this time I had no visitors, beyond Orianne, and an old familiar one whom I had not seen for many years, the tall, beckoning stranger with his sable-hued cloak and insidious pleading: ("You're up on the second deck here above the paving, and with just a simple nose-dive, it'd be all over in less than a minute.")

I thought of Death then, and when the first or second day, the doctor came on his rounds, I told him of these suicidal urgings but also that all I needed was a few days rest, and then I could go back to work at the Station.

"You're not going anywhere," he said, "except out of the Navy. Probably never should have been in it, in the first place. I'm surveying you, Tay, for psychoneurosis."



Meanwhile, on the outside, Orianne had been suffering torments. "Psychoneurosis": neither of us had heard the word before: Mental hospitals; asylums; psycho wards; nut houses; this was a new, gray-green and chilling under-world, twenty thousand leagues under the sea of our common experience. We did not know what to do about it nor where to turn, and after a while we ceased to discuss it, perhaps hoping that, like a common cold, if ignored it would finally disappear.

For the first few weeks I could not bear to leave the womb-like safety of the hospital, and Orianne came out to see me every day after her shift at Ryan's. One of her letters to Mother tells something of this:

"The guard at the gate lets me come in after visiting hours, and we sit in the little waitingroom and hold hands. We have our little jokes; he sends funny clippings to cheer up people who aren't in the hospital, and I go out to cheer him up and then cry all over him, and he cheers me instead."

As the days passed, I gradually regained some of my interest in the outside world, and got myself assigned to the broom squad. Entertainments were held on the big stage in the middle of the compound, and afterwards ("Sweepers, man your brooms: I want a clean sweep fore an' aft"), armed with a long handled dustpan and a little broom, I would join the others in harvesting the cigarette butts and candy wrappers. Seeing the big C on my sleeve, somebody asked me one day if I wanted a job inside typing, but I panicked at the thought of being closed up, and refused. I was spending sixteen hours a day in the open air and having to force myself to go indoors at night to sleep. With my sweeping then, and some latrine duty polishing the bright-work in the head, I gained liberty, and around the first of May, began going home to Orianne at night and reporting back to the hospital in the morning.

Finally, a month or so later, on or about D-Day, my "graduation" arrived, and along with fifty or a hundred others, I was handed a certificate of discharge. "Under honorable conditions," it stated, with the addition of a discreet misleading rubric, "Is not physically qualified for re-enlistment." Along with this came a shower of gold, \$378.99 discharge pay, \$100.00 mustering-out pay, and \$77.00 travel allowance, from San Diego to Dallas. But I was bound, not for Dallas, but for the Menninger Clinic at Topeka, Kansas. I was determined, or so I thought, to get to the bottom of my ailment, and having decided to go it alone, arranged to leave Orianne in San Diego to await developments.

I kissed her good-bye one morning as she left for work, and then later in the day took the street-car to the depot and, laden with gelt

and carrying my old suitcase, boarded the day coach for Los Angeles. I wore my uniform and proudly displayed my "crow." From reading *Soldier's Pay* and other war novels, I knew that you always returned from the wars in uniform, with one arm still in a sling and displaying an ironic twisted grin (what horrors had those eyes not beheld?). For all that, my sentiments were those of the hero in Sloan Wilson's *Voyage to Nowhere*, who at the end of World War II said he felt as though he had awakened from a night journey on the train only to be informed that he had just passed through Arizona.

Orianne had been at my side for most of the time, and you might say that like Mark Anthony, I had performed more valiantly on the mound of Venus than ever on the field of Mars. So thinking, I got out my copy of *Mansfield Park*, which I had always found to have the efficacy of two sleeping pills, and as the train pulled out of the station, said good-bye to San Diego and to the war forever, and settled down to read.

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The Menninger Clinic occupied some of the choicest acreage in the west part of Topeka, out near Gage Park where I had gone to class picnics during grade-school days. Now, arrived in town and knowing where to find a clean cheap Christian bed, I once again registered at the Y. and the following morning, according to appointment, showed up at the clinic.

Its out-patient facilities were housed in an old two-story white frame building not too far from the curb line of West Eighth Street. This was at the edge of a luxurious wooded park where most of the structures displayed the red brick and half-timbering of English country-manor houses.

I was taken in hand by one of the office force, who proved pleasantly enough to be a former acquaintance from K.U. Chinkie Oblonsky had been the unofficial sweetheart of the medical school, a vivacious dark-haired sociology major with snapping black eyes who for years on end had warmed the bed of Gerd Nissen, one of Rick's fraternity brothers. Now, respectable and married but not to Gerd, and the mother of two, she greeted me with her old enthusiasm, and I could feel my shoulders beginning to relax as we chatted about old times.

"I understand you may be with us for some time," she said one day later on, and I nodded glumly, yes, I supposed I would. Pretty soon I found myself being interviewed by Dr. Lois Kreuger, a bland competent female analyst of about forty, a woman with the sympathetic but wary manner of a loan officer in a suburban bank.

Over the next two weeks I talked at great length to her, building up a case history and undergoing a battery of tests, in the course of which I stared at ink-blots and gave my reactions to photographs of glaring implacable men.

I went out to the clinic for an hour or so a day, and in between times renewed some old acquaintances. Over the Fourth of July I went up to Kansas City and visited Buzz Elder, now well set up in a spacious home and raising a family of girls. At the swimming pool in Gage Park, I met some young female librarians and, like Diamond Jim at Rector's, blew them all to a dinner at a downtown cafeteria. In search of old hands to touch I even drifted out to Fillmore Street and visited Mrs. Ed Day. A motherly soul, with Mr. Day now long in his grave, she sat in the parlor of her house across the street from our old home at 1629, and offered me some cookies and a cup of tea. I told her that I was in Topeka as an out-patient at Menninger's.

"I don't know," she said primly, smoothing her apron. "I don't know that they do anybody much good out there. Everybody that I know that goes to them, seems to end up getting divorced."

I even looked up another librarian, one by the name of Caprice Brannigan. I found her still unmarried and still at her old job, the same one she had held when the Baron and I had known her thirteen years before. I did not ask her to make love again and she did not offer to, and I took her to dinner at a decent restaurant and then home, where I respectfully shook hands and then walked back to the Y. At the fortnight's end I had my final consultation with Dr. Kreuger and was given that rarest of all gifts, an actual psychiatric diagnosis.

"Anxiety neurosis." I would need psychoanalytic therapy, five sessions a week over a four or five year period, with no results guaranteed. Their analysts were booked up through September; this was now July. Could I come back in the Fall?

"Gosh yes, I suppose so," I blurted out, and after getting a statement and leaving a check at the business office, caught the train later in the day for Amarillo. I had a powerful urge to touch home base once again, even though I knew that Dad and Mother had long since left town, to live with Manon and Duke in Philadelphia. Accordingly, I had written to Orianne to drive to Amarillo, and once I arrived there, moved into the vacant upstairs bedroom and settled down to wait for her. The Pontiac, covered with dust and its battery dead, stood in the garage like a faithful steed, and I washed and polished it as of yore and got it running again. In spite of the new confidence which was beginning to come back again, I had one last relapse, a spell of extreme nervousness, and at once betook myself

to the Veterans Hospital west of town. There, I described my symptoms and then received a sterling piece of advice:

"Go down to Dallas and get back to work. And stay away from doctors."

A day or so later Orianne drove up, and I fixed her a glass of iced tea and sat her down in the big lawn-swing in the backyard. She bore with her a letter from Deirdre Angrist, "Oh, come on home and stop being wonderful." That seemed to cinch it, so next morning I drove downtown and was royally rooked on the sale of the Plymouth to a used car dealer, and the very next day with Orianne at my side, happily set forth in the Silver Streak to try once more my fortune in Dallas.

I had written ahead to Roberson, and the day following our arrival went into the building on South Harwood to see him. He greeted me warmly enough but with a certain reserve. As he had expected, I asked for my old job back — it would be a simple matter to mark me down merely as "returned from military furlough." Could he? Would he? I searched his face desperately for an answer.

"I guess it will be all right," he said, his blue eyes keen upon my face as though to detect the stirrings of insanity. "Still, we'd better have old Doc Lindfors give you the once-over. Just as a matter of form."

The Tenth Region had its own house physician, a good sound aging G.P. who took no stock in "all this baloney of psychiatry and head-shrinkers," and who frankly told me as much. After giving me a cursory physical examination and a definitive half-hour psychological test (Did I hear strange noises; did I think somebody was following me; did I have bad dreams?), he, like Spike Agrist before him certified me as fit.

"He don't sound crazy to me," the old sawbones told Roberson in my presence, slapping me on the back and chuckling.

For all that, it was two weeks before I was reinstated, during which time I suspected that Roberson was cagily checking out my record in the Navy. In that fortnight, I looked up Bick Ernstrom and once more hit him up for a job. In a new burst of confidence, I asked him for the thumping wage of ten dollars a day, and at this rate began to work at once.

"He wants me to stay with him," I wrote triumphantly to Mother, "and do his office work and get divorces"; but my mind was set on the Commission, and back to it I went, the first of August, to be re-issued my old black Remington portable, my notebook, and I.D. wallet, and to set out on the road once more.

For the following seven months I led the old life, but somehow it was not the same, and sometime in February 1945, heard with great

interest that the Office of Price Administration was on the lookout for lawyers. I applied, and pretty soon, on the 22nd of the month, was appointed a Price Attorney in the Regional Office.

Previously, in January 1943, I had been given a raise in title and salary, to that of Investigator at a lordly \$3200.00 per annum, and now the O.P.A. beckoned with a raise to \$3800.00. Of course, gone forever would be the great days of C coupons, of the easy per diem which had soared to eight dollars, and the mileage allowance which had gone to seven cents and was rumored soon to shoot on up to eight. Gone also, although I did not realize the significance of it, were the freedom and independence of the open road, the ease of movement, and the feeling of control over almost all aspects of my destiny.

Roberson did not conceal his disappointment.

"Oh, Loki, you're quitting now, just when you were really learning the work," he said when I broke the news to him, he who had taken me back when in disgrace with fortune and the Navy's eyes. No matter; my old urge to be a successful lawyer prevailed, ("To wear good clothes and be Somebody"); and not too long after my thirty-seventh birthday, and twelve years after leaving law school, I entered into my first decently paid position as an attorney at law.

In the early Twenties, the white-tiled Fidelity Building at the corner of Main and Poydras, along with the Praetorian and Magnolia Buildings, was one of the finest in town. Before being taken over by the government during the war, it had become a second-rate address, the haunt of loan sharks, one-man employment bureaus and the seedier type of lawyer (just one cut below me).

Now, the entire structure was filled with government offices, the O.P.A. among them. The Office of Price Administration, set up to control the prices of goods and services during the emergency, was of course a new and strictly war-time agency. Now, no one had been in it for over four years, and a wild, free and pioneer spirit prevailed.

My boss was Brad Eggers, an attorney from Ft. Worth, an old abstract man from Southwest Title and Guaranty. He was in his late forties, genial and frog-faced, a sound and unflappable thinker with a dry wit and a good practical mind.

We were in the Regional Office, and the various Districts passed their sorrows and frustrations on to us. Under Brad's direction, I began working on questions involving the ceiling prices of certain articles of food and clothing.

"Loki is in women's underwear," Orianne gleefully told the Gang, and under Brad's direction I began with an imperial hand to issue rulings and directives. This was heady stuff; we could see our own

*Mishnah* and *Gemara* taking shape before our eyes, and in our persons began to assume some of the glowing supernal airs of true creators.

The work was intellectual and highly stimulating. Our boss was Thad Brossard, a tall thin man with a barking laugh and an incisive way of thought. He rode herd on all of us, and when stuck with a knotty problem, we would troop into his office, put our feet on his desk and wave our arms around and holler by the hour over some fine point involving the ceiling price of dirndl skirts or of preserved strawberries.

In this way, like the Mills Brothers who attributed their skill to "getting a tune and sort of fooling around with it till it comes out right," we kicked things about until they sounded OK, to Brossard at least, and then handed down our Commandments from the Mount, for all the districts to heed.

Meanwhile, in another sector of my life, other matters were afoot. For years, Orianne the frustrated architect had drawn hundreds of house plans and elevations and had happily bustled around the home construction sites of our friends.

"Orianne doesn't know it, but Loki will never buy her a house," Rod Bentzen had once confided to my mother-in-law in Corpus Christi; but now, one evening in March 1945, Orianne and I sat in Lee Park, facing a cottage at 3309 Hood Street and talked about buying it.

The park was a seventeen-acre hilly expanse of greensward lying on both sides of Turtle Creek, about two miles north of the downtown sector. This was in Oak Lawn, the Brooklyn of Dallas, where most of the houses, built in the early part of the century, were pleasantly middle-class. By 1945, it was far from what one would call prime property, being considered quaint and Bohemian. Rooming houses abounded; the streets were quiet, shaded by big live oaks and pecan trees, and the dinky little Oak Lawn street car took its time on its way to and from town. There were few young people; in the high-ceilinged old rooms, papered in designs which had been popular during the Harding administration, you could almost hear the widows aging; and there were entire blocks where probably no act of sexual intercourse had occurred for a quarter of a century.

Our house, a white frame cottage with a large screened porch, stood near the crest of a little hill overlooking the park to the South and East. The tops of some of the downtown buildings and the head and shoulders of the equestrian statue of General Robert E. Lee and his aide "Perrins" were visible from our front porch. Arlington Hall, a yellow-stuccoed, white-pillared replica of the general's home in Virginia, stood amongst the massive oak trees and at the edge of a

dark, romantic chasm where small boys swung on wild grapevines and the pansies flocked to the men's restroom to make their dates.

Our lot was only forty-five by seventy, but the house was solidly built and had stood for almost forty years. In the back bedroom, with its separate entrance and bath, lived one Mikel, a lonely and sardonic bachelor who paid forty dollars a month rent and who, we were laughingly assured, "came with the house." The price of the whole shebang was \$7500, which by shrewd bargaining we drove down to \$7250. Our monthly payments were fifty-one dollars, and with Mikel's forty to offset it, we soon found ourselves in financial high-cotton.

Well, we counted up, we had moved eighteen times in the past eighteen months. "Can you stand to carry that phonograph up one more flight of stairs?" Orianne had asked me, and I had to confess that I could not; and so, in the middle of April 1945, almost a year to the day when I had been wandering around the hospital compound with a dustpan and broom, I signed the papers and moved into my own home. Going over to the wall, I gave it a painful and symbolic kick, and shouted, "This is mine — to hell with all landlords!"

Here then, we dug in and here we were to stay for the better part of two decades; and of all those years, the following seven or eight were among the most exciting, not to say the most disturbing, of all.

# # #

"Oh barren years, since last the 'Sail, ho!' cry  
Foretold your rakish masts against the sky."

This romantic couplet rounded off the last of a sonnet sequence which I had penned in the years of living at the Y. In the five or six years that followed that period of my life, I had also whipped up four or five pages of a novel about Dallas, along with a rhapsodic prose-poem concerned with happy days on the farm, and even, anonymously, a short story which was published in a pulp magazine devoted in a mild, *Playboy* fashion to sex. Then too, while in the Navy at San Diego I had dashed off a few pages containing a narrative account of Boot Camp and entitled *Square Knot Admiral*.

Well, nothing came of any of that; the magazine sank into bankruptcy before my promised eighty bucks could arrive, and I did not bother to send off, or so far as that goes, to finish much of the other stuff.

All the time though, the urge to write had been upon me and would give me no rest. ("Never write unless you find you can't possibly avoid it," I have always felt to be pretty sound advice for an aspiring author.) At any rate, after going back to work for the Civil Service Commission in August 1944, I once more began to write, but this time I apparently stumbled onto one of the most important rules for successful writing; Publish Where You Can.

I found no difficulty in publishing, then, since I myself was the publisher, as well as editor, feature writer, women's-news reporter and gossip columnist; in short, I owned and operated the plant. This was *The Bluff View Times Picayune*, a weekly news sheet which I got up and sent to some men that I knew in the service. With the exception of Dag Hydell, who was forty (and as I once remarked, had always been), all the male members of the Gang were in Army or Navy, and my paper was primarily for them.

Well, it was an immediate success, although I do not pretend that the competition was intense or the standards high. It was free and easy in style, and its content was a potpourri of Gang gossip, football scores, book and movie reviews, together with mildly sensational items lifted from the Dallas papers and stuck into a column entitled "Crime, Sex and Gore." From time to time, I could winkle



out a special article or two from Patsy Beck of the *Dallas News*, or from Dr. John Chapin. Chapin was a former lunger and chest-man who had served time with Rick at the San, was a medico of quiet humor and learning, one who reminded me of Oliver St. John Gogarty, the witty Dublin physician who had been James Joyce's friend.

*The BVTP*, as it was called, would run perhaps four or five pages, an original and six or eight smudged copies which I sent on, to be handed from one man to another. It was banged out while on itinerary, or when I was at home, on the old faithful Remington upright placed on the dining room table.

When the war was over and everybody home, around December 1945, I brought out the last issue; but I had run it for a year and half, and promptly made up a book out of the choicest items, entitled it *The Happy Stags*, and sent it to two or three publishers in succession. Nothing came of that however, and I threw the whole thing away. Now, all issues of it are gone or lie mouldering in the attic of Trixie Hydell, who as Chief Librarian always got the first copy.

Regardless of that, I got enormous pleasure from the writing itself, and one supposes that the lonely men in the barracks enjoyed it also. Now, I began to have the name of someone who was interested in writing, and as such attracted the attention of Henry Nash Smith.

I have mentioned Henry before. He was on the editorial board of *The Southwest Review*, the literary magazine spawned by the collegiate press at S.M.U., although chiefly occupied as a professor of English at Berkeley. I had sent him some copies of *The BVTP* and received his dry comment, "Some day I'm going to do a paper on 'The Influence of S. J. Perleman Upon American Literature'." To him I had also sent about this time, a highly amateurish article on Texas slang. He had written back a kindly letter, concealing his dismay as best he could. There was, he indicated in his beautifully mortised-and-tenoned prose, no market for this sort of thing; not if done by amateurs. "These matters are handled largely by experts"; but he added that my letter which I'd sent along with the article was better than the article itself. Why didn't I try my hand at some book reviews?

Armed then, with a sort of left-handed introduction to John McGinnis and Lon Tinkle, I winded my way, as Ma Carter would have put it, late one Tuesday afternoon in the Spring of 1945, to *The Dallas Morning News* building at Lamar and Commerce Streets.

McGinnis and Tinkle were professors at S.M.U., although of what stature or rank I did not know, the former of English and the latter of French. At the *News*, McGinnis was the Book Editor and Tinkle

was his assistant. McGinnis was a stooped and wispy-haired man in his early fifties, who talked with a knowing leer and a wild cock-eye rolling around at you. For years he had been S.M.U.'s adult campus radical, the den-father of such liberals as Bywaters, Chapin, Tinkle and Smith.

Tinkle was a man with wavy hair and of medium height, a man with a distinct resemblance to William Faulkner and one who cultivated a polished cosmopolitan air. Even at this time, in his late thirties, he was the William Dean Howells of Texas literature, a skilful and discerning critic and historian, a man who could be counted on to meet Katherine Anne Porter at the plane; who, should the need arise, could converse with André Maurois in his native tongue. He was a formidable raconteur and master of ceremonies, his speech as clipped and barbered as his black mustache, and his eyes dark, searching and restless. Both he and McGinnis were kindly men, at least to me, and now they received me graciously enough in a small stuffy room crammed with new books. I could feel the beat and thunder of gigantic presses through the soles of my feet, and there was a smell of newsprint and printer's ink in the air. Jesus Christ, I thought, and like Br'er Rabbit, bowed and scraped, made my manners and 'lowed howdy. I dropped the name of my friend Henry Nash Smith, and, Mistah Charley, boss, cap'n, please-suh, did they have any books that needed reviewing?

Well yes, they did; and pretty soon I was hiking back up Commerce toward the street-car stop on South Ervay, with a copy of George Sessions Perry's *Walls Rise Up* clutched in a happy fist.

In this field of book reviewer, as in that of novel-writing, I had no idea what I was about, but as Carlyle says, a loving heart is the beginning of knowledge, and with such a heart I set to work. At home, I slaved over the review for nights on end and finally came up with five hundred words or so of muted enthusiasm, done with just a dash of criticism for the author's overbearing seriousness, comparing it to some of his later works (this was a re-print), mentioning Thoreau and avoiding the use of the word "evocative." Yes, it would do; it would do nicely; and a month or so later, for the first time, I saw my name in print in the Sunday book review page of *The Dallas Morning News*.

"He enjoyed the best of fame — local fame," someone has said of someone else, and from then on, over the next fifteen years, I gradually acquired a modest reputation as a book reviewer. Even my mother-in-law was impressed, and from 1945 on I went to the *News* offices again and again, coming away with what were undoubtedly the trash-fish of the catch, but fish for all that, hugging to me the new-smelling books in their slick and sparkling wrappers. I got

mostly first novels of "promise," or art books which I could latch onto for my permanent library.

Late in the Fall of 1945, I breathlessly reported to Mother some of my adventures while helling around the Pierian Spring with some of the boys:

"Went down to the *News* and there sat McGinnis and Tinkle, and talking with them was a gent of distinguished appearance and a dark brown suit, about 50, and by him on the table was the most beautiful gray homburg you have ever seen, and a CANE. The Book Fair had just concluded here and this citizen was, he could be, none other than an AUTHOR. He was introduced to me as Monte Barrett, and he is a San Antonio writer — had just finished *Sun in Their Eyes*, a Texas novel of 1812 . . . Later, McGinnis, his head in the air and talking a mile a minute, took me home, narrowly missing a truck, running half-way through a red light before I could stop him, with a police car drawn up at our side, bumping into another car when starting up again, and narrowly escaping death down here on the turn up Hall Street from Turtle Creek. He then said that he was very much pleased and mightily surprised at the quality of my reviews, and then amazed me by saying that if I ever wanted to take up the professorial life, which we had at one time discussed, I could make a name as a critic."

Well, critic or no critic, I don't know that I unearthed any great talents, although I managed to say a good word along the way for such later well-known folk as Jean Stafford (I fell in love with her picture), and for Frederick Wakeman of *The Hucksters* and for Sloan Wilson, later of *Gray Flannel Suit* fame.

Of Han Suyin's *The Mountain is Young*, I wrote:

"Anne is drawn with loving care — an English Carol Kennicott in far Nepal; 'knowing that she herself had compromised with the never-enchanted, the ruthlessly dull, who were frightened of beautiful things —.' If this sounds not unlike any housewife faced with Tuesday's wash, don't blame me; it will in any event sell thousands of copies and it does beef up the plot."

Of the Duchess of Windsor's *The Heart Has Its Reasons*, I observed:

"The story of her struggles is a gripping one, and so well told that, cad that I am, I suspect the presence of a ghost around the old castle, with a typewriter rather than his head, tucked underneath his arm."

Sometimes, stooping to parody, I brashly contrived a review in the style of the author himself: Of e.e. cummings' *seventy one poems*,

I wrote:

"hee hee cummings. badhumorman peddling absinthe eskimo pies to the sexbadboysandgirls of greenitch village. novelist (the e.e.normous room. 1922 ohbaby remember), poet and artist to boot an old master painter of the faraway trulls (the eddieguest here beat his breast for he heard the lewd buffoon) pours here upon his countrytisofthe.e. sings a thin bitter treacle of a few short poems."

For a while there, it seemed that off-beat poets were my specialty. Of Ezra Pound's *Guide to Kulchur*, I wrote:

"In this reprint of a 1938 work, Pound is a triple-threat man, all over the field, cracking down on some system of money (I never found out which), rolling logs for his pals, pouring boiling oil on his foes, roaming around antique cultures with odd bits of poetry hanging from his weskit pockets, and stamping every ten pages or so with untranslated ideograms from Confucius."

As the years wore on, I rolled a log or two myself, one of them for my friend Warren Leslie, the debonair sophisticate who was one of Stanley Marcus' bright young p.r. men, and one for Gwen Shook, a handsome Highland Park socialite who wrote under the name of Gwynne Wimberly.

Of Warren's *Love or Whatever It Is*, I commented, apparently just after a heavy bout with Gibbon, "This novel is joined together with loving care; its prose is cadenced and its characters memorable."

Of Gwen's *One Touch of Ecstasy*, after detailing some of the heroine's sorrows, I observed:

"Of such quivering gobbets of agony are best-selling novels made. *One Touch of Ecstasy* drips with well-bred woe, and our author keeps up the tension from the first paragraph to the last. Both she and her book are vividly packaged and both have élan, verve and a touch of ginger . . . It will be fun — and a little terrifying — to watch what happens to Gwynne Wimberly."

So I went on, pasting my published reviews in a cheap scrapbook, reading five or six new books a month, pounding out my copy in time stolen from vocation, house-painting, car-washing and furniture-restoring. After a couple of years with the *News*, feeling that my soaring talents were not sufficiently appreciated, I switched loyalties and began working for A. C. Greene at the *Times Herald*, receiving as before no pay for the work, but only the gift of the books.

— — —

"Poo got her rugs today, long staple cotton, going to have them dyed light green. They are 4x6 size, \$14 at Sears; she has sewed them together to make an 8x18 rug."

Thus Loki Tay, freeholder in the Year of Our Lord 1945, writing his Saturday letter to his mother. Later we find the contented householder, by the grace of God, a thrifty housewife and the loan of a piano from his father-in-law, basking still more in the flowering of his *Arts and Decoration* dream of twenty years before:

"The livingroom looks very fancy now, with the black grand piano and a bowl of green stuff in it, and the bookcases and the rugs, and all. Poo says she is trying to make a respectable citizen out of me at last. 'Sit up straight,' she says as she drives me downtown in the mornings, 'you are a great man.' 'Yeah,' I say, 'yeah'."

About this time the McDermotts, Eugene and Ruth, were playing cultural footie with Margo Jones over the establishing of a professional repertory theater, and John Rosenfield, the gifted critic of the *Dallas News* put my name in the pot as a prospective member of the board. Sitting with this prestigious group over the years, I was to meet such glittering members of the Establishment as rag merchant Arthur Bremer, banker Deavitt Nay, actress Greer Garson, and of course the ubiquitous Tinkle. In such company, I sat desultorily for a couple of years, warming a chair but contributing nothing of note (between them, Art, Gene and Margo seemed to have everything pretty well figured out). Finally, the Margo Jones Theatre-in-the-Round, or Theatre '47, got off the ground and into a building out at Fair Park; but of that, more later.

Meantime Orianne in addition to her household duties was making surveys, conducting opinion polls for the Daniel Roper outfit at Denver. In this work, "sampling the universe," she roamed around Dallas and surrounding counties in the Pontiac, interviewing folk of every conceivable age, color and creed. Her fees from this augmented my salary at the O.P.A. very nicely, and I began to sink down with happy little sighs of bourgeois contentment into my new existence. With all this however, old desires began stirring once more and creeping out of the brush into the open.

Of course, once we were settled into our new home, we were quick to have the Gang over for parties, and at one of those, Heloise and Olaf Trifan were guests. Like Trixie Hydell, Heloise was also blue-eyed, light-hearted and the child-bride of a father-image money-bags. I had never had any especial eyes for either her or Trixie although she had always reminded me of Melanie Rambo of old Amarillo days, the delightful way she had of tossing her head as she showered down her tinkling, silver laughter.

On this particular occasion, I had had a couple of drinks and had gone back into the kitchen to fetch more ice for the guests. Heloise met me as I was coming out of the swinging door into the dining-room and impulsively came up to me and kissed me. It was a great warm smothering French kiss, a real tonsil-tickler, and as she swung her hips forward I could feel the *mons veneris*, the bony shield doubtless flecked with silken down (I never found out for sure) coming up hard against me. I staggered over to the sink while Heloise laughed, got a glass from the cupboard and went back through the door to re-join the others.

I stormed into the bedroom and perhaps with some race-memory of a moonlit pasture in Topeka, tore a blanket from the bed and, going across the alley, threw it over the bamboo hedge which enclosed the Woman's Club. I then went back into the house, insanely bent on luring Heloise into the kitchen, and from thence — to where? — and for what? — but of course she would not be lured, and next morning I sheepishly retrieved the blanket, hoping that Orianne had not noticed its absence from the bed.

Well, nothing came of the incident; nothing that is, beyond my being struck by lightning. Certainly, on Heloise's part it had been nothing but a thoughtless gesture, something done in fun, although one suspected that things generally had a habit of turning out her way, and that beneath that giddy exterior lurked a whim of iron.

At any rate, the very next day, with no encouragement whatsoever, I began to call her, and continued to do so every day for a month or two. Sometimes I would call when Orianne would be sitting in Heloise's sun porch sipping coffee, whereupon Heloise would excuse herself and run upstairs to the phone extension in the bedroom. What we talked about, and in what accents, God Himself has forgotten.

Certainly, we never kissed again, nor, although I dreamed about it, did I have the gall to suggest that we meet somewhere, perhaps in a room out at some No-Tell Motel, or at some intimate candle-lit bistro where we could sip peasant wine and listen to gypsy violins.

At the climax, unable to stand the pressure, after I had heard through Deirdre that "Olaf says he has lost all respect for Loki," I wrote Olaf himself a letter, telling him all about it, and thoughtfully sent a copy to Heloise at her residence. At this, she had hustled downtown and got Olaf's letter before he could receive it, and shortly thereafter I told Orianne everything, and the four of us had one last, strained meeting, all of us icy and polite, and then we saw them no more except at a distance, amidst the din and battle-smoke of large cocktail parties.

This was my first experience in fifteen years, since the days of

Mavis McLean, with the strangling, corrosive, compulsive type of love, something that hit me like mustard gas, and I reeled and choked with it, until at last, with the writing of my letter, it was mercifully over.

Certainly Orianne kept on with me, faithful and tender. A year or so after all this, I find her writing to my mother:

"Loki is in Dumas on business. I was lonesome for him two hours after he left. I've put on his robe and slippers to comfort me a little. But we need a separation. How can you appreciate fully perfection unless you don't have him for awhile. He is the dearest, smartest, cutest" (she failed somehow, to write "the most faithful") "husband a girl could have."

So much for all that. Meanwhile, with my father, things continued to move along also, but his path lay downward. As I have said, he and Mother had gone to Glenside, a trig little suburb located north of Philadelphia. As before, the letters and the entries in Mother's diary continued to spell out the bad news:

"Went to bed about 8:30 and Dad up at 10, then back to bed, where he threw up all over my back, and Manon came and we changed his bed and he had stroke in chair; slept with him in my arms and he had a slight one every hour until 5 a.m." (Here she was once more, in the days of '93.) "All strokes just shivering, and not bad in the morning . . . Face becomes so red at night, but he is cool looking in the morning . . . Hears voices and bells in his head and tries to get rid of them . . . Pounded me with his fists during the night, but calmed down later."

Finally, alarmed beyond measure, on April 5, 1946, at the age of thirty-eight for the first time in my life boarding an airplane, I went back to Glenside.

Here I stayed for two weeks, in the Prices' comfortable home, a red-brick Colonial on a pleasant street near a golf course, and here, one sunny Saturday afternoon, I took out the stump. This activity had been a ritual with Dad and me on the farm, one of us hacking away at the roots while the other one bore a hand with the spade, and afterwards, Dad drilling a hole with the big auger and ramming the dynamite down in with the crowbar. Now, seeing that the Prices had a stump that needed removing. I volunteered for the job, and Dad came out into the yard with me. He sat in a chair in the front yard directing the work, while I, clad in a pair of Duke's old work pants, hewed manfully away.

For both of us, this was a fine occasion, and now and again I would take a break, lean on the shovel and chat with him. In con-

versing, he could mosey down the road all right for a couple or three sentences, but then fantasy would overtake him and he would wander off.

"Surely is nice out here in the sun," he remarked during the course of the afternoon, and then leaning over pointing. "Now, Loki, take out that other root, there"; but then he dozed off and came to with a start. "When's Rick coming in?" he asked, making inquiry of his son who had been dead these six years; "he ought to be here by now, he left Kansas City this morning." "Oh, he'll be here just any time; Manon and Duke have gone down to meet him." "Oh; that's nice"; and he unhunched his shoulders and sat back with a sigh, and then shut his eyes and went to sleep again, a white-haired old man sitting in an iron lawn-chair, his shoulders stooped but still powerful-looking, with deep pouches beneath his eyes and a rug thrown over his knees.

Later in the week Jane came down from Boston, and she and I and Manon, the three of us, stood at Dad's bedside like children in the Old Testament asking for the patriarch's blessing. "What are *you* doing here?" Dad barked at us — "did you come for the funeral?" Then, later in the visit, his mind wandered back over his career, and he remarked, "You know, I always took what they offered me," and then, settling back into the bed-pillows with a sigh, "Oh, Mother, I am drifting down the River of Time."

Manon's two girls, Carole my favorite, the twelve-year old bright-eyed little sharpie, and Maria the sweet-faced trusting one, were around of course, and I played silly games with them, and Manon drove us all around town, sightseeing, going to movies, lunching at Wanamaker's and touring the great Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Finally the visit was over, and then about nine months later, on January 31, 1947, my father, age sixty-eight, and having broken his hip by falling out of bed and being in the hospital with a cast, called Mother to him at four in the morning and kissed her goodby, and then, at seven o'clock, "Mother," he said, reaching for her hand, "Mother," and was gone.

Of course, in Dallas, upon hearing the news, we made plans to drive to Amarillo at once. Somewhere around Wichita Falls, with Orianne driving I fell asleep, and when I woke up it was after sunset; we were on the High Plains and the flatlands stretched all around us. We fled through the dark and brooding land and it seemed to me that I had been reading a phrase in a novel, "When I awoke it was very late and we were driving very fast," and I felt warm and excited and very much alive. Orianne and I bedded down in a motel on the outskirts of the Wolflin Addition where I had wheeled bricks and mortar twenty-odd years before, and awakening



in the chilly dawn, I turned to her, flipped up her nightie, climbed aboard and had a long, arduous and deeply satisfying screw, a triumph of the living, it seemed to me, over the dead.

A day or so went by while Mother was bringing the body back by train. We met her at the Santa Fe Depot and waited until the men from Blackburn Brothers could unload the casket from the baggage coach. "In the Baggage Coach Ahead," I thought, being reminded of the hillbilly tune on which Rick and I used to harmonize. The casket was heavy; Mother had picked out the best, and altogether for the funeral spent two thousand dollars out of the five which she had received from Dad's insurance.

The services were held at the First Presbyterian, formerly the Central Presbyterian, Church, with forty or fifty mourners attending. Black Willie Mae was there, seated in the rear, and my friend Ann Lee and her mother — Ann, by then a Broadway actress, with whom I had sawed away at second fiddle in the symphony, and of course the men from the Santa Fe, Ed Bowser, Mr. Board and John Dane, the Big Boss Tom Ballinger having long since been transferred to Chicago.

On a bright February day then, we laid Dad to rest by the side of his son out at Llano Cemetery, "where he can hear the train whistles and the freight cars that he loved." The black-walnut by Rick's grave which Dad had planted as a seedling six years before was by now a fair-sized tree, and later on we took Mother, numb with grief but still dry-eyed, back to the house, and a day or so later, Orianne and I returned to Dallas.

Later on I returned to probate the will, and a bitter note appears in the diaries, to be followed, over the next few months, by some poignant entries:

"February 16, 1947. Loki and Orianne left for Dallas at noon. Did not ask me to go with them but wanted me in an old lady's home."

"March 31, 1947. Two months today. Still paralyzed and am sure I will very soon hear his step, one soft then hard scuff, then soft, then so quick and glad to be home . . . . Rained soft like Howard so loved . . . . Later in the night, Dad called me from the hall and I awakened. Why?"

It must have been in this period that Mother donned her Queen Victoria outfit, never to abandon it — everything in black, the small stingy-brimmed flat-crowned hat with a veil looped up around it, together with sensible black shoes, heavy Real-Silk stockings, and a chiffon dress which reached to the ankles. The entire outfit was completed by a black cane, an elegant one with a silver band which I had carried during senior year at law school.

She now had a pension of about forty dollars a month from the Railroad Retirement Board, and the spurts and dribbles of rent-money made up another hundred or so. With this income, and with the annual passes which the railroads continued to furnish her, for years she made progress through the country, visiting her children, dropping in on distant relatives and even on one occasion going to Cuba. She kept in close touch with Merrie Spencer at Colorado Springs and spent long months by herself in the cabin at Woodland Park. It was there, years later, that she met the last of her own true-loves, and with that we shall deal in due time.

Meanwhile back in 1945, the Atomic Age began and a couple of big bombs were dropped on Japan (nary a voice, mine included, did I hear raised in protest); some time that year, President Roosevelt died, and a scared but feisty Truman took his place; and some time also, first Germany and then Japan surrendered. On VJ Day, August 5, 1945, I was rough-carpentering some bookshelves for the livingroom, and as the sound of the celebrating horns and whistles increased along Turtle Creek, I dropped my hammer, straightened up and declaimed, "My God, Sugar, the greatest war in history has just ended, and here I am building bookshelves"; so we drove downtown to Main and Akard and joined the rest of the fools in their whooping and hollering.

Gradually, more than ten million men began drifting homeward from the wars, and not so gradually, gas rationing was abolished — for the first time in four years you could drive up to the pumps without coupons and holler for them to "fill 'er up." With this, it was all too evident that the times of price control, the golden days when the cost of living was pegged but wages were not, were headed for the sunset. With the end of controls would come the end of O.P.A.; clearly, the agency was a sinking ship, and at least one rat decided to leave it.

Gus Dusseldorf was a peppery little man with a clipped mustache and a brusque manner. He was Decie Schlitz' brother, she and George being late-comers to the Gang. One night at a party, Gus mentioned the fact that he needed an administrative assistant. He was "one of the high muckity-mucks," as Mother would have put it, down at the R.F.C. in the Cotton Exchange Building. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation was a Depression-baby, originally conceived to administer financial transfusions to a sagging economy, but which now at the war's end, found itself saddled with the disposal of war surplus.

"Examiner, RFC, Grade 12, \$4100 p/a; transfer from Price Attorney, OPA, \$4300 p/a. Effective, cob, 11/7/45."

It was a come-down both in salary and in status; still, even I

could see that the disposal of surplus war property was going to be bigbigbig; then too, here was another band wagon handy, and I was not slow to jump up on it.

As I had suspected, I soon found that my position along with my income, had altered for the worse. From being a power in my own right, my opinion sought after and respected, "with servants and serfs by my side," I now found myself a Figaro-factotum, scurrying around as a high-priced errand boy and file clerk. Along with my other chores, I assembled and distributed the bulletins and directives, the ukases and pronunciamientos from Washington which were beginning to come into the office by the bale. My files were located in Gus' glass-walled sanctum, and I was in and out of there all the time. "Loki slips into my office quiet as a mouse, and then out again before I can notice him," he once remarked, and for all my lowly position, I continued to enjoy working for him and to appreciate his direct, forceful manner and his salty speech.

"Go out and tell Jack Bowart to hire us a receptionist; get one with a nice smile and big tits. OK?"

Thus Gus; and then for a short period I broke out of his orbit and into one of my own; it was known as O. and M., Organization and Methods. Here, mindful of my old course in management, I tried my hand at a few organization and flow charts, and worked on office floor-plans, to which, so far as I could tell, no one paid the slightest attention.

In time, our surplus property fief broke off from the principal demesne and, as the mushrooming War Assets Administration, set up its own little castle-on-the-hill. As W.A.A., we soon enough moved out of the Cotton Exchange Building and into a hastily converted warehouse at McKinney and Harwood, and from thence in time, when the assembly lines had been dismantled and the machine tools sold off to speculators, to the North American Aviation plant at Grand Prairie.

Somewhere along in there, in early 1946, I was raised to "Admin. Asst., CAF-9, WAA, \$4776.60 p/a" and then, finally, after much finagling, agony and suspense, on July 28 of that year, to "Atty. P-5, WAA, Office of Real Property Disposal, \$5905.20 p/a."

Well, this was something like: For the first time in my life I was faced with positive affluence. I had long since paid Dad for the car; and the utilities, upkeep and house payments were less than a hundred dollars a month. In those days, one should bear in mind, you could still get a good bottle of beer for ten cents; the Bluebonnet Laundry would clean and press your suit for half a buck; creamery butter was going for thirty cents a pound; and life insurance ads displayed photos of ecstatic couples who had retired on a hundred

and fifty dollars a month.

Yes, my balance of trade was favorable; I had a beautiful wife and a lovely home; McGinnis liked my reviews; a professionally framed reproduction of Winslow Homer's "Gulf Stream" stood above my mantelshelf; and Margo Jones knew me as Loki, Dahling. At the office, I had been raised, Cinderella-like, from the scullery of O. and M. into the parlor of Real Property Dispoast; and, and —

Nietzsche says that he who fights with monsters will himself become a monster; that he who stares into the abyss will one day find the abyss staring back at him. So it was, that with everything apparently going for me, in less than a year I found the abyss staring back at me.

# # #

E. C. Burley was a tall gray-blond lawyer in his middle fifties, a man of blameless white collars and a formal manner. He was Jack-the-Bear on real property law, having been an old land-acquisition man for the War Department. Now in 1946, with W.A.A. as Chief of the Legal Division in the Office of Real Property, he was faced with the task of putting the milk back in the cow.

Through him I had wangled my fine legal job, and now in the summer of 1946, in the windless hush that precedes the tornado, he and I, together with two or three other barristers sat at uncluttered desks. For several months we shuffled through files, "counting paper clips" as Dad would have said, read the *U. S. Code Annotated* and did little to justify our salaries.

By the time Fall came around though, the big new cumbersome agency, its numbers swelled from two hundred to two thousand in a matter of months, began to be air-borne, and we all found ourselves caught up with it. As in the O.P.A., there was the same Land-of-Beginning-Again stir and excitement, the same air of promise and fair hope.

In this the Legal Division, our work was the drafting of deeds and other documents in accordance with regulations, supervising the wording of advertisements, and interpreting the statutes and regulations to a sometimes appreciative but often scornful and angry bureaucracy. The lawyer in government service, when he is not directly involved in trial work, is half office-worker and half attorney; he has a hard time maintaining his profession status. At any rate, I slaved over the regulations, compiling thick folders and spending Saturday mornings at the County Law Library boning up on the jurisprudence of real property. We did no title work, since all deeds were quitclaim and all sales "as is, where is." There was an elaborate system of priorities, and of course the pressure was intense; municipalities, churches, schools, former owners and their duly elected representative in Congress, all came squealing and grunting to the trough. The war was over; everybody had money; "let's bring the boys home, sell all this stuff off, and everybody settle back and enjoy life."

In all this, there was no indication that some of the stuff might be

needed again: that another or different war was about to begin. We sold off millions of dollars worth of property after a ten-day advertisement in the local papers, and the sharp-eyed speculators and fast-buck boys swarmed around us like flies around a boarding-house syrup pitcher.

A vignette of all this is presented in a letter which I wrote to Mother in the Fall of 1947:

"Well, I must close and get out those deeds and letters of intent. Hey, Loki, what's the matter with giving a discount to a church, they're exempt under 101(6). Yeah, but they're not an educational institution. But they're getting a discount down in the Houston Region. Are they? Yes. Seen anything from Washington on it? No. Tell them nothing doing, and let them squawk. Yeah, but down in Houston . . . . Silence, peasant. I have spoken."

From this epistle we can see how some of my days were spent, and also how, like every other office worker since the days of Hammurabi, I was not above dashing off a personal letter now and then on the boss' time.

As employees of W.A.A., we were forbidden by law to buy any surplus property for ourselves. Yet one day the call went through the building, new Army blankets, a buck a throw, up on the second floor, and thither I went with the others, to throw my money down. That somebody high in Property Management, later on, was to acquire an entire munitions plant in Mississippi, was somehow overlooked in the confusion.

All this went on then, and I gloried in my new position and status. Yes, all was well for a few months; but then on November 17, 1946, E. C. Burley went on up the ladder, and I was promoted to Acting Chief of the Legal Division, and not too long after that, found myself an out-patient in the one-room clinic of Damon Winstead, Psychiatrist.

Damon Winstead, M.D., was a slim, fair-haired man, suavely tailored and with the Karo syrup manner of the well-heeled society practitioner. I had rubbed elbows with him and his wife, a portly bustling woman with a smile like an electric sign, at various symphony and museum soirées; and now I lay on the couch in the Edwardian gloom of his office and talked away my life at fifteen dollars an hour.

I do not recall much of what I talked about; probably mostly of "stomach trouble," of dreams, and of difficulties at home and at the office. In my job, as we have seen, at the age of thirty-eight, I had known my first taste of power, and like every slave who yearns for freedom, once freed, I hastened to impose slavery upon others.

"Tay's out here, trying to run War Assets all by himself," was a comment by a man whom I had dubbed The Terrible Turbeville, an Assistant Chief over in Property Management who could be counted on, at least once a day, to reduce his secretary to tears. With his department, as undoubtedly with all others, once I achieved executive status I adopted a rigid, self-righteous attitude, and entered into ignoble plottings and childish stratagems which were not only unworthy, but, worse yet, unworkable. Following some dreadful contretemps involving the removal of utility lines at Camp Howze, I was called into the office of Assistant Regional Director Savo and treated to one of the most artistic chewings-out of all time. His door was open and the entire office bull-pen listened and watched with ill-concealed enjoyment. I made my escape as best I could, and undoubtedly my underlings at the office and my wife at home caught hell for the rest of the week.

To at least a couple of the lawyers under me, I was dictatorial and unbearable; when I said "frog" they steadfastly refused to jump, or when I said "jump" they refused to ask "How high?" Beyond my little course at S.M.U., I had no training in management or supervision, nor did I or apparently anyone else see the necessity for any. Like many a housewife confronted with her first maid, I regarded employees as mechanical extensions of myself, as merely an extra pair of hands — of *my* hands, that is — and was puzzled, furious and hurt when they seemed to have a will of their own.

This art, the art of supervising others, I was never to learn, although it took me many a bitter and heartsick year to realize it. Yes, in this field, in accordance with the Peter Principle, I had reached my level of incompetence; my clock had struck twelve.

At home, the same forces were at work, and here again, I never really mastered the art of supervision, or perhaps more accurately, the art of domination.

By 1947 of course, Orianne and I had been married ten years, and in that time, the battle-lines had been pretty well laid out. We were, both of us, high-strung, talented, wilful and ambitious; both of us second-born strivers, with buckaroos for mothers and soft-spoken cultured charmers for fathers. From the time of acquiring our house, Orianne and I had gone on, each nursing his own theory of house ownership. Mine was that a home was a dwelling where you saved rent; hers, that it was a show-case for her considerable talents as decorator and home-maker. For years, she had been proffering advice, not always asked for, to the various female members of the Gang, as they acquired and then set about furnishing their new homes. "Not blue, Trixie; oh no, not *blue*!" she had cried out upon viewing the shade of Trixie Hydel's newly acquired livingroom car-

pet, and over the years Deirdre Angrist had not allowed her to forget it.

In the years following 1945, Orianne then, had found her past rising up to haunt her, and had herself suffered from new-house-neurosis, that malady which is akin to the panic of the creative artist when faced with the blank sheet of paper, the unfilled expanse of canvas, or the fleeing unhewn block of marble.

From time to time she would order up new outside blinds or some other debauchery, and I would counter-attack with an excess of flirtation with other women or perhaps by one of my "spells," in the course of which I would mope about the house for days on end, with a lack-lustre eye, no appetite, and the old hollowed-out lost feeling heavy upon me.

All this, together with my night-and-day-dreams I unburdened upon Dr. Winstead. My free associations always started with one scene, perhaps part of the Old Oaken Bucket Syndrome: it was always the same, and always static, fixed like the old Living Statuary which used to be a part of every circus performance, the living figures posed in what were taken to be classic drapes and attitudes, all set on a revolving stage. In my fantasy, it was always a warm sunny day, and I was standing at the bottom of the hill on the farm in Topeka, looking up at Mother and Rick at the top; they were waiting there, waiting, waiting — for what, and for whom — I never found out.

I went to see the doctor twice a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, and gave him a thirty dollar check at the end of every week. This was not too painful, since I was then drawing a forty- or fifty-dollar monthly pension from the Veterans Administration for my alleged "ten percent service-connected disability."

"You get some money, and then go and spend it all on doctors!" was a mortar-shell which Orianne began to lob into my trenches at about this time, and which she continued to lob in during many of the years to come.

Well, regardless, I continued to see Dr. Winstead for about six months, in 1947, and then, after an interim of several months, for another half-year during 1948. Why I quit going the first or so far as that goes, the last time, I do not know; perhaps it was disappointment at not being "cured"; perhaps fright that I might be. Neurosis is like sea-sickness; half the time you're afraid you'll die, and half the time you're afraid you won't; and in any case the psychiatric patient never really seeks a cure, but rather an ally for his secret wars.

"You're quitting now," cried Dr. Winstead, "just when we're getting into all this homosexual business."



My God, I thought, *what* homosexual business; and, not pausing for an answer, fled into the sunset. The phrase "latent homosexual" had not yet become chic, nor a happy, waste-basket, catch-all diagnosis for the practitioner or, so far as that goes, for the parlor analyst, and so I escaped it, at least for the time being; and anyhow, in the early Spring of 1948, an event came to pass which should have resolved any doubts about the matter.

For years now, as I have said, Orianne and I had been wanting children, and to this end had taken hot baths, cold baths, pills, rest, exercise, God knows what, along with periods of continence followed by periods of incontinence, of the most dedicated love-making. Time and again, I had wagged samples of sperm, procured in a manner that was nobody's business and contained in a Trojan condom, to the offices of Dr. Guy Hackathorn over on Maple Avenue. All this, only to receive one discouraging prognosis after another — Orianne had too much acid, or perhaps not enough; I had enough sperm (I had thought all I needed was one) but apparently they were all moody, foot-loose fellows, off somewhere shooting pool or drinking beer instead of being at the office tending to business.

For years, along with other members of the Gang, we had played the game of "Guess Who's Pregnant"; and now, in March 1948, Orianne played it with me. "Guess who's pregnant?" "Oh, gosh, I don't know — Trixie, maybe, or Deirdre —." "Oh, no — guess again!" "Well, how the hell should *I* know?" "Well, you *should* know — on account of this time it's me!"

In spite of the morning sickness and discomfort, Orianne revelled in the next five months; they were some of the happiest of her life. I was being especially loving and attentive, going with her to the clinic on pre-natal care at the Health Museum, walking by her side as she did her mile around Lee Park in the summer dusk. As she grew swollen, we resorted to making love side by side instead of stacked, and then afterwards we would palp her watermelon belly and speculate on what our little rascal was up to now:

"Oh, feel *that* — you just *know* he's riding a bicycle."

"No; that was a one-and-a-half-with-twist, off the high board."

So much for playfulness; and then on the afternoon of September 25th, Orianne happened to be cleaning house while I was out in the alley, refinishing some shutters.

"Sugar, all day I've been having some sort of cramps, perhaps from all that Italian food last night"; and we look'd at each other with a wild surmise, silent above the Woman's Club garbage cans.

Then, "This may be It," we whispered, and went indoors to phone Dr. Wyatt Brin. He told us to light a shuck for Baylor Hospital, which we did in a rollicking mood, forgetting in our hilarity to pack

a bag or to take along any nighties or other such flummery. On arrival at the old Florence Nightingale adjunct which then stood at the corner of Gaston and Gordon Streets, we went our ways, she to the ward and I to sit in the lobby.

I read something by D. H. Lawrence all night long, and then finally about daybreak, a nurse shouted through the halls, "Tay — it's a boy!" and I went outside and stood on the little portico looking out over Gordon Street and at the brightening sky in the East. I gulped down the morning freshness and knew that I was seven feet tall; I could feel shock-waves of happiness rolling through me like the tremors of an earthquake.

We had already decided on a name, and later on, when I could go in and see her, "It's a little Rick," I whispered to a still groggy Orianne and she gave a little smile and then fell back into her twilight-sleep. Pretty soon I routed the Martines out of bed with a six o'clock phone call, and posted off an air mail letter to Mother in Philadelphia. In a day or two I brought Orianne home, and with her of course, the seven pounds of red wrinkled monkey, "just the size of a Sunday roast" as our friend Ellen Goodbody remarked; and, sometime around the first of October 1948, the three of us started out together on our new life.

Part of this new life was centered about folk singing, in which field I had become an enthusiastic if still amateur performer. At that time, late in the Forties, if there were more than two or three folk singers in all of Dallas County, that knowledge was concealed from me. Of course there was always Peg Moreland, whose name was often mentioned to me as being "somebody who sings those old-time songs like you do"; but I never bothered to look him up, although I should have. Certainly he had much more to teach me, than I, him.

Of course, there were plenty of C. and W. as well as R. and B. people around; country-and-western artists who were still being called hillbillies and rhythm-and-blues singers whom a less sensitive generation had known as "coon-shouters." At one time or another, the rutted pitching sidewalks of Deep Ellum had known the footsteps of such greats as Leadbelly, Blind Lemon Jefferson, and on occasion, Mance Lipscomb, Lightnin' Hopkins and even Josh White; but of all of these and of their great traditions, I was happily and WASP-ily ignorant. The national folk scene, if there was such a thing in those years, was dominated by Burl Ives, with such performers as Carl Sandburg, the Almanac Singers, Woody Guthrie, Susan Reed, Pete Seeger, Cynthia Gooding and Richard Dyer-Bennett pretty well filling out the bill.

With all this in the background, some time in February 1947, I

approached my father-in-law for a non-paying job. Martine's had bought fifteen minutes of time on Radio Station KSKY, and now, instead of relying on records, here was a chance for the show to acquire some live talent. There was no great difficulty; "To get on that program, you've got to be either talented or related," Orianne had commented, and so I was accepted and then turned over to Little Nan Drury and told to work up some programs.

Little Nan was the daughter of the program's director, a genial witty advertising man named Paul Drury. Little Nan was a pert bright-eyed chit just out of Sweet Briar, brim-full of ideas and with a twist of lemon peel in her personality which I had always found delightful. I went over to her house on Stratford, where we sat on the livingroom rug in approved Bohemian fashion and whipped up a few fifteen-minute programs. The format consisted of folk songs with guitar accompaniment, interspersed with commentaries, and dialogue with the announcer. Both Nan and I strove for the light touch, and with a carefree hand lifted whole paragraphs out of the various Lomax books and from Carl Sandburg's *American Songbag*.

I have said what I sang were folk songs; but the distinction between them and any other songs, a matter which has caused much spilt ink and bitter desk-to-desk fighting amongst the pundits, troubled me not at all. Like Leadbelly, who had been known to follow "Ain't No Mo' Cane on the Brazos" with some of the most shamelessly pops numbers of his day, so I too, in addition to "Jim Crack Corn" and "I Know Where I'm Goin'," also scheduled such music-hall favorites as "Bird in the Gilded Cage," and (who did I think I was, Maurice Chevalier?), "The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo." After hearing this last number, my friend Til Briese of the Speech Department at S.M.U. was kind enough to place a warning hand on my elbow: "I don't think it's exactly your type of song," he said mildly, out of a vast compassion.

With great excitement then, one Saturday afternoon in late February, I followed Little Nan up to the studio for my try-out. I suppose KSKY could be called a Mickey Mouse operation, but to me it looked like CBS, New York. I had never been to a radio studio before, and now for the first time was ushered, dreamy-eyed, into the magic World of Entertainment. Here, as in the TV studios of later years was a fascinating carpeted world of heavy padded doors, of ON THE AIR signs, of finicky microphones and of "levels," of humorless, fussy young men in earphones who twirled knobs and made mystic signals behind panes of thick glass.

"I had my first program Monday at 5:15," runs my letter to Mother on March 14, 1947. "I got off early from work and went up to the studio and they briefed me on how to sing

and all. I had had a try-out Saturday and they had said I was terrific. I have to put up with a little kidding at the office, but that doesn't bother me."

Terrific, eh? Well, after all, whose the hell son-in-law was I, but that of the sponsor?

I had showed up at the studio then, at the appointed time, at the witching hour for my first radio gig, and got through my act in fair enough shape. My voice was strong but as yet indeterminate; I had not yet decided whether I was a folk singer or a singer of folk songs; and from then on, I filled the same slot every week until early summer. As I have said, my pay was nil, but my rewards were beyond the dreams of avarice, or of emotional avarice, at least.

For one thing, I began getting fan mail:

"Congratulations on the flavor of simplicity and genuineness you project so well," wrote Mrs. G. H. Joiner of Mesquite, Texas, inquiring also, did I know the words and music to "Mabel, the Whale in Mobile Bay." Later on, S. E. Dineman of Dallas opined, "The program is one of the most relaxing and interesting we have heard in quite some time. Give us more."

Naturally enough, everything was not peaches and cream: "You use the wrong chords and jangle a lot," wrote Alan Lomax, to whom, later on, I had sent a tape, and "Well, I caught your act on the radio," growled Eisenlohr, my sworn foe and fellow attorney at War Assets, "and I guess it's good to have a talent for *something*." Earl Dorsite, a "real" lawyer, as I always termed the legal heavyweights of my acquaintance; Earl then, was more charitable, and came through with what both he and I at the time thought was a compliment. "I just heard you on KSKY," he telephoned, "and dog-gone, Loki, it was *great*. You sounded just like Burl Ives."

"Rosenfield, the music critic, said I ought to be a ballad singer, not a lawyer, and that I could be a good one," I wrote sometime along in here to Mother; and still later on in the year I reported again to her, "Agent called me up this week, and said he could book me into the Village Vanguard at \$125 a week for fourteen weeks."

The Village Vanguard: My God, I thought, the place in Greenwich Village where Burl Ives and Harry Belafonte got their start, and, as I sat in my windowless cubbyhole at War Assets, the Babylonian delights of Hollywood and of show biz boiled through my head; blond young women languished outside my stage door or waited for me behind the wheels of sleek foreign sports cars. Once again, I was standing on the back porch in Amarillo; should I, shouldn't I, willyouwontyou-willyouwontyou; and finally I decided against it. Yes, like a housewife who "gave up my career as concert pianist to marry Jim and move to Seattle," I opted for the easy fa-

miliar way, for the daily ride to Grand Prairie and the files and folk that I knew, and, so far as that goes, for Dr. Winstead.

Well, Vanguard or no Vanguard, next year, in 1948, the big 50,000 watt station WFAA got hold of me and for ten bucks a throw signed me up for a weekly fifteen minute sustaining program. My spot was in mid-afternoon on Sundays, when, as nearly as I could figure it, everybody was either asleep or making love, or probably in some instances, both; but regardless, the tiny flicker of my fame was kept alight, and I continued to enjoy the work and even added an accordionist, Cleo Boyd, to the act.

Yes, I enjoyed my work at WFAA, although in some respects the station was pretty up-tight in some of its policies. I had to get clearances for all my songs, which in some cases proved a bit difficult for numbers which had first seen the light of day in the times of Good Queen Bess; and the script had to be submitted ahead of time for approval. In one instance, my program director came boiling up to me just before I went on.

"Say, Loki, we've just got to make a few changes in this script." "Well," I said, racking my brain to guess where the fault might lie, "come to think of it, 'Tomorrow Is St. Valentine's Day' is pretty gamey — all that stuff in there about 'Let in the maid, that out a maid/ Never departed more' — and then, at the last, 'Young men will do't, if they come to't/ By cock, they are to blame.' I guess I see your point."

"Oh hell, that's Shakespeare — that's *literature*. But just look here, in this other song, you've got the word *whisky*! 'And he that drinks good *whisky* straight until he's half seas over!' My God — on *this* station!"

"Hmm. Why don't we just say, 'good nut-brown ale! That's got a nice literary ring to it.'"

"Yeah, I guess so. Well, mark it on your copy too, and I'll let it go through."

So, while Greenwich Village continued to struggle along as best it could without me, I kept on batting out my programs, learning somehow in the process how to sing folk songs, from Ellie Turnbull and Jerry Ballentine how to sound my vowels and not to fade out on the last words of the song. As I gained some listeners, I began to do programs for this group and that, sometimes for money, sometimes for free, for Janet Dorsite and the Junior League, for Lillian Tobit of the Columbian Club, for Dorothy Muggles and the League of Women Voters, and for Alex and Mauri Seibert, of whom I shall have something to say later on.

In all this, as may well be imagined, I stoked my ego with the attention and approval, and bore as best I could the times of "freez-

ing" while on stage, and the lost-and-hopeless feeling, the wishing the earth would open and swallow me up, when I felt out of place or that I had lost my audience.

About this time also, in mid-1947, I enjoyed an all-too-brief friendship with John A. Lomax. This dean of American folk song field collectors was then nearing his eightieth birthday. Someone, perhaps Cappy Botts, mentioned his name to me, and I betook myself, all unannounced, one day in early Spring to his house in the Forest Hills Addition near White Rock Lake. About mid-morning I knocked on the door of a comfortable white brick cottage, a place well-shrubbed and surrounded by magnificent old live oaks. I rang the bell, and pretty soon was stammering out an introduction to the person who opened the door, an old man, unshaven and to my eyes in the terminal grip of some dreadful ailment. As best he could, he bade me enter, and after we were seated on the couch, I told him what I was about, all the while wondering how I could make my escape. He was a stout heavy-jowled deep-chested man, balding but still brown-haired, and his eyes along with his speech, were of a vagrant and unfocused nature. His breath came in great gasps and wheezes, his white shirt was open at the collar and his shoe laces were untied.

As the Victorian novelist might put it, I was the prey of conflicting emotions; should I get the hell out before I became involved, somehow, in his imminent death; should I phone for the nearest physician; or should I stop by Sparkman-Brand's establishment on my way home and tell them to go over and measure their prospective customer for a coffin?

Just then, the sound of rattling dishes came mercifully from the kitchen, and under pretext of getting a drink of water, I eased on back to the rear of the house. There I found "Miss Ruby," a calm and motherly gray-haired sort, complacently washing-up the breakfast dishes.

Again, I introduced myself, and, added some sort of apology; I had no idea Mr. Lomax was in such wretched health.

"Oh, he's all right," said Mrs. Lomax, still busy over the soap-suds; "there was a hootenanny here last night and he had a little too much party. Just come back this afternoon after he's had his nap — you'll see."

I took her advice, slipping out the back door without further ceremony, and that afternoon, just before sun-down, presented myself again at the front door. This time I was greeted by a transfiguration, a man of robust charm, shaved, necktied, and be-suited as though for a director's meeting. Again he let me in and seated me on the couch; I made no mention of the morning's visit, and neither did he,

and soon we were talking away at a great clip. I told him of my admiration for him and that I had two of his books; *Cowboy Songs* and *Our Singing Country*. I told him of my spot on WFAA; would he do a program, or a set of them for me, he could name his own price (I had in mind about fifteen dollars). Well, yes he would, and subsequently wrote two or three which I gleefully produced and for which I paid him not half enough.

Sometime in September 1947, I had moonlighted a divorce in Ft. Worth for one Chrisy Schmidt, a charming fellow worker at War Assets, and in addition to the fee had received a present of *American Ballads and Folk Songs*. This was John and Alan's joint effort, and this, I presented to John for his autograph on September 23rd. That was his eightieth birthday, and Orianne and I were invited to the party. There was a great stir, and by the end of the evening many fond and sentimental presents had been given and many fond and sentimental toasts proposed, among them some sort of ballad made up by me for the occasion. Four months and three days later, in a hospital in Greenville, Mississippi, John Lomax lay dying, and according to legend, as he lay, trolled out the ballad of Big Leg Rosie.

Just before World War I, he, Frank Dobie and some others had founded the Texas Folklore Society at Austin. At his suggestion, I had sent in my five dollar membership fee, and then, more than a year after his death, in April 1949, attended my first meeting.

"San Antonio, Texas. Juarez Plaza, La Villita," reads the program, printed on the butter-yellow stock then favored by *El Paisano*, the society's news sheet. Farther down the page, the eye encounters such items as:

"The Guidonian Scale in Europe and America, by Ernest Harrison; Sacred Harp Songs, by the Southwest Texas Sacred Harp Convention;

The Bexar Archives as a Source of Texas Folklore, by Malcolm McLean;

Exhibition of Modern Square Dancing, by Rickey Holden and Dance Team;

Tale Tellers of the Southwest, by Fred Gipson;

Putting a Region Into Books, by J. Frank Dobie;

Coon Stories, by S. W. Adams;

Jewish Folksongs, by Rose Bernard;

Schoolboy Taunts and Insults of Fifty Years Ago, by

Mody C. Boatright"; and, along in the middle,

"Songs of the South African Veldt, by Loki Tay."

As one might guess from all that, the society was humanistic rather than scientific; literary rather than anthropo-or sociological;

and fun rather than fussy.

I do not remember much of this meeting, beyond its delightful setting in O'Neil Ford's charming restoration of La Villita. Probably I was unduly concerned over making a good impression with my modest two-cents' worth. Dobie was kind enough to say that I was one of the best ballad singers he had heard recently (just how many he had heard, and how recently, I did not pause to inquire).

All this marked the beginning of one of the great influences of my life. In the years ahead Orianne and I were to become happy amateur folklorists, to attend Society meetings all over the State of Texas, and to get to know some of the most vital and charming people in the world.

As I have indicated, the tone of the group was humanistic and literary; perhaps this was due mostly to the influence of Frank Dobie. He was a gusty warm-blooded man, a lover of folk tales and of Jack Daniels Black Label, a man more at home, you might say, in a corral than in a carrel. Insofar as production was concerned, he was the very opposite of what writers call a bleeder, and turned out one volume after another, including the well-known *Coronado's Children*, which was a collection of lost-mine stories of the Southwest, and the partly autobiographical work, *A Vaquero of the Brush Country*.

Dobie was a prime example of the members of the society, most of whom were professors of English with an interest in folk lore, and men of droll and pleasant humors. In the Society, they found a congenial place where they could press-gang their students into doing research for them, and then every year or so bring out an article in the Society's annual volume which would preserve their status in the academic publish-or-perish rat-race. At the annual meetings, moreover, where you could expect to rub elbows with almost anyone but some member of the "folk," they could foregather with their peers, drink a little beer, perform or listen to some folk music, swap trade-talk and, so far as that goes, be lionized by such happy-go-lucky dabblers as myself.

So much for the years ahead and the T.F.L.S.; meanwhile, on Easter Sunday, 1949, Orianne and I checked out of the Plaza in San Antonio and drove north along US 81 toward Dallas. Once back home, we found old problems confronting us, the most important of which was the matter of my vocation.

By 1949 of course, the war had been over for four years, and naturally enough, as everyone knew, there could never be another one. Most of the war surplus property by then had been disposed of; the star of War Assets was waning, and all over the building the R.I.F.'s, the reduction-in-force notices, were flying. Few if any of us could predict that the star was soon enough to arise under the name



of General Services Administration, although some of the old hands sagely mumbled the bureaucratic folk-say that in the Government, the agencies always changed but the faces remained the same. Few of us though, had any such wisdom, and for months I had been sweating out a job with the Veterans Administration. My boss from O.P.A. times, Brad Eggers, was there, and I had haunted the V.A. offices, which were then on the upper floors of the Santa Fe Building. Sometime early in 1949, I went there for the last time, to find Brad and the rest of the top legal hands sitting around the library table in a state of shock. Somebody had been shaking the plum tree; somebody had been futzing around with the organization chart; their entire operation had been ordered transferred to Denver or some equally barbaric location; they were being offered, along with the transfers, a one-grade drop in salary; and you could have cut the gloom with a knife. On my way home, I decided that the government service was not for me, and began to consider an offer which I had received a few weeks earlier.

Around the first of the year, I had wandered into the office of my father-in-law at the Martine Music Company. He had offered me a job with the firm, and I who was equally dumbfounded and flattered, gently turned it down, as I had in the past rejected the offer of Shalo Westboyd. Now, however, I began to look at things in a different light. In a certain novel which I shall discuss in detail later on, the protagonist sees a certain girl in a cafe, and instead of going on about his business, walks through the door to meet her. "If you have seen them taking the hogs through the chutes at Armour's, amigo, then you have seen me walking through that door," runs the comment of the author, writing in the first person; and now, on a certain fine Saturday morning late in the Spring of 1949, I walked through that door.

# # #

At one time, most of the prestigious retailers, Neiman's, Volks and the rest, along with the wagon-yards and saloons, had been located at the lower end of the business district, down toward the river and the courthouse. By the 1930's, however, most of these had moved on up the hill toward St. Paul and Harwood, leaving E. M. Kahn and Sanger's to fight it out at the corner of Main and Lamar.

Among the establishments left behind were the music stores, which, like retail furniture outlets, need lots of cheap floor space. The Martine Music Company was one of these. Originally the Southwest Automatic Music Company of Ft. Worth, it had been founded well before World War I. In those days, its main stock in trade was the electric automatic piano, designed for movie houses too poor to afford a Hope-Jones organ. My father-in-law had come to Dallas as manager of the store in 1922, and by 1927 had bought out the controlling interest from the former owner.

By that time it was a full-line music house, carrying pianos, organs, band instruments, phonographs, radios, sheet music and records. By 1949 it had taken on a corner location, a commodious high-ceilinged, three-story brick building at the corner of Elm and Ritson and was well established as one of Dallas' principal music stores. It had all or most of the choice lines, Conn, Hammond, Everett and Steinway. Its exclusive franchise for Victor Red Seal Records had long since gone the sorrowful way of most such permits, but it remained the only place in the county where you could buy a Magnavox phonograph or radio.

At this time in 1949, Albert Henry Martine was sixty-one years of age, a goodly portly man, i'faith, and a corpulent. He was of medium height, with keen, crinkly-lidded brown eyes, and with pompadored black hair which once in an ill-considered fit of irreverence, I accused him of keeping touched up. His gaze was level, shrewd and benign, and his walk, with one shoulder held higher than the other, was that of a man toting a full milk pail in one hand and bearing before him a bushel basket of Grade A eggs.

It was certainly wishful thinking rather than any direct promise that led me to believe that he was about ready to retire, and who knew — who, indeed? — who his successor might be. He held a

commanding position in music retailing, not only in Dallas but in the country at large, being a man with a talent for finance, a broad outlook, and the courtly manner of one reared in the genteel Southern atmosphere of deep East Texas.

In the little railroad, lumber and cotton city of Linetown, less than two hundred miles due east of Dallas, on the Louisiana border near Shreveport, he had grown up with the music business. Old salty K. D. his father, had likewise been his town's leading music merchant. At one point, Albert (he was never called Al or Hank) had taken a degree in electrical engineering at the University of Michigan, and by coincidence was in Chicago working for Samuel Insull at almost the very time when I was being born. His father and mother had been divorced in an era when "nobody" did such a thing, but his father had retained custody of his son and soon married again. What with "Miss Lin" and her sisters, Albert then, like Achilles had spent his formative years in the company of adoring women.

After his three years in Chicago however, his father appealed to him to return to Linetown. Like my own Grampie Franey, K. D. claimed to be "living on borrowed time — not long for this old world," and Albert dutifully gave up his scientific career and fluttered back to the nest. K. D. of course rallied at once and enjoyed another thirty-five years or so of indecently robust health.

In Linetown then, Albert had stayed for eleven years, shoring up the financial underpinning of the family music company and putting things to rights generally. He was a financier rather than a salesman at heart, endowed with all the Ben Franklin virtues; and it has often occurred to me that the law of negligence, which speaks of, but has never seen, the mythical "reasonable, prudent man," has just never happened to run across my father-in-law. He had all the strengths and weaknesses of the gentle but determined, and as was said of the conductor Med Vehta, "He's a wonderful guy, but God help you if he wants something and you don't want to give it to him."

With all that as backdrop, on the first day of July 1949, having taken, with my five-hundred dollar stipend, a fifty dollar monthly cut in salary, and after a lordly four-week's vacation, from War Assets, I, the Industrious Apprentice who had married the master's daughter, reported for work and was taken in tow and introduced around the store. The building was formerly the Dole Department store, a schlock house which had been allowed to run to seed. Less than ten years before, Mr. M., as he was know around the store, had ripped out all the interior but the walls and the floors, and now everything was tailor-made, dusted, polished and in its pre-ordained place. For all that, some of the scars of the Depression still showed;

happily enough, one of these was the meager five-hundred-dollar monthly rental which was paid to Trav Higginbotham for the entire building, and the sub-letting of the first-floor corner to a linen shop.

Here on the main floor, band-instruments were displayed, along with sheet music; pianos and organs took up most of the second floor, and teachers' studios and a recital hall, the third. Repair and tuning departments along with storage areas, were scattered hither and yon throughout the store, and the basement boasted an entire band-instrument garage complete with electrolyzers and acid tanks.

The business offices were on the mezzanine, but I shared a small nook on the second floor with Liz Dilbeck the Advertising Director. Here, as in the early days with R.F.C., my desk was small and my duties vague. Liz was a great comfort to me, being a creative soul with the figure and hearty life-style of a Friar Tuck. With her, I joked and jollied and went out for coffee, meanwhile busying myself as best I could by keeping performance records on the company's motor pool and by browsing around in a worthless set of books which I had bought and which was entitled *The Funk and Wagnalls Library of Business Administration*.

I often prowled around the store by myself, on the piano floor footing it fealty over the gentle cream-colored carpet, wandering amongst the beautiful Steinway grands, running my fingers over their glossy flanks and feeling like a young caliph on his first tour of the royal treasure-rooms.

All this exultation however, was short-lived. Later in July all the Martines embarked for New York to attend the annual clam-bake of the National Association of Music Merchants, and not too long after that, the credit manager resigned and I was appointed to serve in his place.

It fell to Delph Traweek, who had been credit manager in years past, to saddle-break me for the new job. Whatever else Mr. M. had trained his people to do, he had not trained them in the difficult art of instructing others. Delph was a tall, loose-jointed tallow-haired woman, as ugly and efficient as concrete, with merciless eyes and a biting, sarcastic laugh. Along with Office Manager Rupi Dunstall and the treasurer Mr. Rafe, Delph had been with the store for years, and was, as Mr. M. would hasten to assure you, "very loyal and hardworking." Between her and me it had been hate at first sight. Here again as at War Assets, was to my mind a hostile black-hearted female to deal with, someone with all the social graces of a Captain Bligh and the heart of a tiger. Decades later, I came to understand and sympathize with her, but now it was pistols for two, coffee for one, beneath the old dueling-oaks at dawn. Hate, then; and, "Here," she snapped over her shoulder, motioning me to the

credit desk and about to instruct me in thirty minutes' time how to handle half a million dollars' worth of receivables. "here, come over to this table, and I'll show you how to make out these cards."

Retail credit, "buy today, pay tomorrow," is a recent democratic invention. For centuries it was considered, as the Duchess said of sexual intercourse, far too good for the common people. But in recent decades it has, along with the aforementioned activity, really come into its own.

In early days, the credit manager was considered merely an over-paid bookkeeper with a little authority, someone who occupied the unenviable position of a "hard man" in a commercial bank. Hyman Stokolsky, one of the credit men for E. M. Kahn, once told me of his first day at work and of his sixty seconds of on-the-job training:

"Hyman," he was told by his superior, that arch-foe of credit men, The Boss Who Considers Himself a Great Judge of Character, "Hyman, you sit over in that corner, and whenever I don't want somebody to have credit, I'll send him over to you."

An echo of this primitive ethos still lingered on at Martine's, where the Piano Department was allowed the royal prerogative of passing on its own credits. With that major exception, my one-man department was allowed to run its own show. In the heat of the bale-fires of Delph Traweek's hatred and envy, she who bore like the Turk no rival near the throne, for months on end I floundered about ass-deep in the mire while she sat back and enjoyed the spectacle. In spite of all that, my mistakes and *gaffes*, I managed to pick up the credit business in the same way that the Wright brothers learned to fly, by getting the hell up into the air and doing it. Besides learning how to "make out these cards," the dainty little reminders which were sent out to delinquent accounts, I do not recall receiving any instruction in credits at the store other than the beard-stroking counsel once imparted to me by Mr. Rafe.

"Never trust a Mexican," he opined, "unless that is, he's a *good* Mexican."

Martine's of course "belonged to the Red Book," the credit rating directory put out by the Retail Merchants Association. This publisher of Dallas' financial *Doomsday Book* was a first-rate firm of its sort and also carried on a school for credit managers, and early in the Fall of 1949, I warmed a chair in its classrooms.

Here, I picked up the fundamentals of credit management, the value of getting a good application at the outset ("an account well opened is half-collected"), along with the three C's of credit — Character, Capital and Capacity. To that Holy Trinity was sometimes added a fourth, Children, and even a fifth, the Court of Domestic Relations.

Armed with this new knowledge, I set myself to become a professional credit manager. After many months, I found to my amazement and perhaps that of Mr. M., that I was a good one, being especially strong on collections. To all intents, my ancestors-on-the-job had been arm-chair credit men; they had buried themselves in the office-enclave, solemnly mailing out invoices and statements, followed by telephone calls and a series of standardized hints, reminders and duns which ranged in tone from mere narrative on up through indignation and dismay and which culminated at a point just this side of hysteria.

Now, scrounging a company car here and there, and using my own on week-ends, I ranged the countryside, repossessing band instruments which had been sold before World War II, and settling sheet-music accounts which had been festering for years.

"Oh yes — *that* clarinet. Well, we got it so Brenda Sue could play in the band, but one of them little screws got loose and Martine's wouldn't make it right, and then we moved, and didn't hear from you folks any more. We would-a let it go back a long time ago, if anybody had've just come after it. It's over in the closet there, you can take it along if you'd ruther."

"Well, yes, you know, I sent that music back, but your Mrs. Grahame wouldn't give me credit — I guess some of it *did* have Cline's stamp on it, but what difference did that make, it was all in good condition. Well, I guess I *do* owe *something*, and if you'll give me some idea of what it is, I'll just make you out a check right now."

As you might gather from that, a vast deal of our work was with music teachers. Martine's kept up the largest stock of sheet-music for hundreds of miles around, its closest rivals being pretty well confined to the San Antonio Music Company, Russ Wells at Denver, the Werleins down in New Orleans and the Jenkins boys in Kansas City.

The typical music teacher, and especially the instructor in piano, was the widow of a professional man who had obligingly worked himself into an early grave, living high but leaving little; little that is, beyond a nice house in the suburbs and the grand piano which had been a part of the dowry but which hadn't been touched since the wedding. It was not felt that any qualifications were needed, no training in the theory of learning; the old Chickering quarter-grand was dusted off, tuned and restrung, an ad was placed in the Yellow Pages and a membership taken out in the Dallas Association of Music Teachers, and there you were. There were of course, dedicated professional people of the stature of Van Katwijk and Velucci, and later on, as the artist-in-residence concept grew, such men as Gyorgy Sandor and Alexander Uninsky at S.M.U. By and large

though, private music instruction was carried on at the cottage-industry level by those genteel females, many of them dedicated, charming creatures, some of them old bats who would smile at Mr. M. at a music teachers' banquet one night and cut his throat on a piano deal the next morning.

For decades, Martine's had been a one-price house, and commissions on the sale of pianos and organs only a nostalgic gleam in the teachers' eyes. Generally, the customer who could be sold on name, on quality and integrity, bought either at Martine's or at some other one-price house; and the "sharpen-up-your-pencil-I'm-a-tradin'-fool" customers and those who brought along their son's teacher "to pick out a good piano" usually wound up elsewhere.

"Here, sit down at this table," Delph had told me; and I had sat there, not to arise, in a manner of speaking, for more than two years. From the Summer of 1949 to the Fall of 1951, I continued to trudge down the same dusty road. I would report for duty at or before the official opening hour of eight-thirty, knowing full well that the entire store was waiting for this idle-rich son-in-law, this boulevardier, to stroll in around ten and to stroll back out around four. The building superintendant Jimmy Routh would have been down for an hour or so, flipping switches and reading cash registers, and I would say "How-dee" and wave to him as he stood in the band department aisle below me and as I flung open my windows on the musty, closed-store atmosphere. I would open the safe then and drag out the piano ledger and get ready for the day's business. Gazing out my window, I could see the dusty tops of a row of parade drums almost level with my eyes, and below me and across the aisle, a lighted display of fiddles racked upright in their niches and cradled in brown velvet.

Later on in the day, prospective purchasers would try out trombones or clarinets beneath my window, and along with all that, I could return the greetings floated up to me by various members of the music community whom I was getting to know, perhaps violinist Zelman Brounoff, or Lanham Deal of Civic Music.

The business office likewise would soon fill up with noise which would continue all day long. Our office was about thirty feet by twenty, with an eight-foot Celotex ceiling. Over by Mr. Rafe's desk, an antediluvian washed-air "mildew-machine" groaned its way toward obsolescence. The OK machine, by which charge-account floor-sales were approved by the office, buzzed constantly, and some of us flew to answer it; the Burroughs posting-machine, along with typewriters and the Pitney-Bowes stamper, clacked and chattered away. A wooden counter, about breast-high on a tall Indian princess ran along the front of the office; set down into it was a formidable

National Cash Register heavy with years and decked out in baroque nickel in the style of 1912. The drawer-bell of this monster clanged intermittently, as customers came in to pay their bills or as sales-clerks drifted up to the office for change.

"Guess we need some change down in the basement."

It would be some docile sheet-music clerk with varicose veins and a husband long since out at Laurel Land; and Delph would swagger up to the counter like a member of the Shore Patrol bearing down on a drunk sailor.

"Change? How do you want it? Tell me — I can't know by just *looking* at you."

Delph's voice had in it the clang of rusty old iron and her smile would have curdled milk.

"Well, goodness, I don't know —" and a ten- or twenty-dollar bill fluttered down on the counter from listless fingers, "I don't know — just — you know — some change —."

I still kept up my State Bar dues, and even hung out a shingle over the Ritson Street entrance. The expected law business for which I still yearned did not materialize, but I used my Poobah situation as a successful gambit in collection work. I would send out Martine letterheads, signed Loki Tay, Credit Manager, and follow them by correspondence from Loki Tay, Attorney at Law, 106 No. Ritson Street. Oftentimes the unsuspecting debtor would phone in:

"Hey, I see you've turned over my account to some damned lawyer."

"That's right. And he's a real booger — but it's not too late to call him off, if you want to start those payments up again."

This always amused me enormously; for one reason, since it bolstered my secret belief that most literates either can not, or will not, read.

Generally speaking, I enjoyed collection work, in which the aim was to get the money and at the same time to keep the good will of the customer. Like my folk singing and book reviewing, it offered me a solution to my central problem, that of achieving by the same stroke, both approval and domination. I enjoyed likewise the thrill of the man-hunt, of tracking the skip or dead-beat to his lair, even though oftentimes the search resembled the quest of the old Quaker for his horse, an animal which was "hard to catch and no good when caught." There was too, the peril always involved of running into determined if not vicious opposition, a peril like that of stepping across a minefield in the snow. One day, in the early Fall of 1949, while innocently sitting at my desk, I received a phone call; and it seemed as if the ghost of Seaman First Class O'Connor from Camp Farragut, Idaho, had drifted into my office and drawn up a



chair by my side.

"Mr. Tay?" The voice was high and strained and at the very top of indignation. "This is Ira J. Kirsch, and we've been leasing a piano from you. I just got your letter about the back-rent — and I want to tell you by God, that I don't give a damn about your God-damned accounts or whether they're up-to-date. I just want to let you know I've got money to pay your damned bills, and I don't appreciate your God-damn duns; and another thing —" the voice went on and on, and I sat frozen, giving back some feeble and cowardly response, and then finally hearing him bang down the receiver. I got up and walked around town for an hour or so, talking to myself.

Nothing like this had hit me since the Winter of 1944, when I had walked in the snow down to the little chapel and back, sick with guilt and fear and boiling with hostility. Later, Kirsch came into the office and we had a top-level confrontation with Mr. M., and all of us shook hands. I never saw him again, not in the flesh, at least, but I continued seeing him in fantasy for a year or more. He even came to replace Delph as an object of my homicidal mania, Delph, whom I had been mentally pushing into the path of onrushing motor vehicles for months on end; but all that was as nothing compared to the black hatred, which in some ways seemed to resemble love, which now engulfed me.

Over and over now, I watched Ira Kirsch sinking into quicksand, up to the chest, up to the throat, up to the eyes, while I stood smiling on the bank, refusing to throw him the plank at my feet. In daydreams I called him up or went to see him, and delivered obscene ranting speeches; "I'm sorry our services don't suit you, Mr. Kirsch; why don't you take a leg off that piano and — shall I tell you what to do with that leg, Mr. Kirsch?" I delivered exquisite barbed epigrams, marvels of sarcasm, delicately feathered shafts which were soon dyed with his hearts' blood.

A week or so after my brouhaha with Kirsch, my friend Roger Ferris invited Orianne and me down to the Texas Rose Festival in Tyler. I had known Roger from old War Assets days. Being gifted with a *tenore di grazia* voice and holding a Bachelor of Music degree from Juilliard, he had been deemed ideally suited to head-up one of the sections in Real Property Disposal. Perhaps less incongruously, being a blue-eyed, strapping fellow of remarkable presence, he was now Executive Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce in Tyler, and to that snug little town deep in the pine forests of East Texas, my wife and I repaired some time in October.

Kirsch, I need hardly add, went with us; not in the car, but in my blood-stream. As is well known, neurotics hate Christmas; and now

I viewed the pageants and the floats, the banks of scented flowers and the lovely oil-rich Beauty Queens, through the bilious glare of hatred and the shock-waves of guilt. At odd moments I sang to myself the refrain from "Hangman, Slack Thy Rope," not as something that I felt was being merely performed but as something that was being lived:

"Oh, the briery bush,

It pricked my heart full sore;

Oh, once I get out of the briery bush,

I'll never go back any more."

And, "God," I kept silently praying, "God, don't ever let me go through anything like this again. Not ever. Oh God, not ever again."

When the week-end was over we drove back to Dallas, and in the long months ahead, as I gained some measure of skill and confidence at my job, as I learned to put-down the toughies hard at the outset, most of the torment, after the fashion of a kidney stone, finally passed away. I could look up then and breathe once more, and begin to enjoy some of the happier aspects of working at Martine's.

Late in 1951, Mr. M. took me on a long train trip, a visit to the Babson Institute at Wellesley, Massachusetts. This was Mecca to my father-in-law, he who had been a Babson *aficionado* for years, running as best he could his store by the book, following economic trends with a careful eye. Now, as we rolled along through the barren fields of late Fall, I heard once more the managerial dicta and theories of Mary Parker Follett and the abstractions of Jan Smuts' Holism, along with the endless success-stories that had befallen my father-in-law. Like an Icelandic skald chanting-out the tribal Eddas, he recited incidents from his business life. They were all happy little vignettes, highly polished, told lovingly and with infinite detail, and I was to hear them again and again over the decades ahead. I did not mind this, especially; they gave me a lift; they reflected all the confidence of his early days, when God was in his heaven and Teddy in the White House.

At Wellesley, in the charming Williamsburg atmosphere of the Institute, we were made aware that a war was raging in Korea, and I had the impression that the scheduled talks had been replaced by discussions of the best ways to store securities above waterlevel. There would be tidal waves surely, caused by the atomic bombs which were certain to be used in the ensuing World War III. Here I met Roger Babson, a venerable man full of vitality and good sense, one who sported a white goatee in the manner later made famous by Colonel Sanders of Kentucky-Fried-Chicken fame. During a seminar on securities, he was asked bluntly, "What's the best investment?" and just as bluntly replied, "Good children."

There was that trip then, and also during these times, the conventions. Our fiscal year, or as some termed it, the physical year, ended June 30th; and then would longen music-merchant folk to go on pilgrimage. During Depression days, all the Martines had been wont to pile into the big Buick, and, without benefit of air-conditioning or freeways, set out on the thousand-mile, three-day trek to Chicago. By 1950 though, things were booming, and that year the store sent six or eight of its people, one from almost every department and a mixed bag from the office. This first trip I took in company with Liz Dilbeck and with Mick Goff, who held the position, newly created and destined to die a-borning, of Director of Public Relations. Liz, along with Mick, was good company, and laden with expense-account draws, one Wednesday at noon we boarded the Santa Fe Pullman at Ft. Worth, and from there laughed and joked our way to Chicago.

There, the thick carpets of the Palmer House welcomed us, and we made our way amongst the delegates, all of them decked out in new ties or in H. H. and G. — hose, heels and girdle. All up and down four or five floors of the vast, luxury hotel the exhibits ranged, crammed with enticing merchandise; here the big orders were written, policies hammered out, new lines introduced, old dealers fluffed off and new ones taken on, the rooms loud with talk and heavy with the scent of good cigars. All the manufacturers and jobbers were here, setting up hospitality rooms everywhere and welcoming all badge-holders with tooth-baring smiles. Later on, as it all drew to a close, I would attend the convention banquet in the Grand Ballroom, with the crystal chandeliers winking overhead and the ranking members of the hierarchy, clad in cream-colored dinner jackets, seated on a long dais at the end of the room. (“Deeply grateful for this honor, gentlemen, and unworthy as I am to accept it; nevertheless, on this occasion let me state —.”)

Now, in the hotel, as at a summer-day swimming pool, the faces were open and happy, in spite of the fact that here the retailer met head-on with his “resources”; two classes of people, who for all that they inhabited the same game preserve, were nevertheless natural enemies, like the leopard and the gazelle. Indeed, you might term their relationship hostile symbiosis, the retailer clamoring for more national advertising and fatter discounts, the manufacturer forever appointing new dealers and upping the sales quotas.

“Hi, Jim.”

“Hi, Harry. How’s tricks out in San Deigo?”

“Couldn’t be better.” Thus Harry Solway, all smiles and drive, but perhaps even then locked in a set-to with rapiers on the edge of the cliff with Hammond or Magnavox.

Here Mr. M., he who had been the Association's President back in the Forties, swam in his element like a fish in the sea, jovial, open-handed, brimming with good-will. Here he was truly adored, and felt wanted and loved, for all that his beloved exclusives were being eroded away by competition and the astringencies of the Anti-Trust Acts. He was the group's intellectual and its financial wizard, the Bernard-Baruch sachem of the tribe, revered for his wisdom and deliberation and his basic sense of fair play. From his reading he had picked up a highly effective prose style, and was in great demand as a banquet speaker and a composer of the testimonial plaques and scrolls which were always being handed about from one mandarin to the other.

As a mere credit man, I was out of touch with most of this, but wandered happily in and out of the exhibit-rooms and about the bustling streets of the great city, and with memories of twenty years before, visited my Rembrandt and the Manets at the Art Institute. (What had happened, I wondered idly, to my little friend of so long ago?)

As the guest of various suppliers, I attended the complimentary luncheons and banquets, and in this connection for the first time met the Steinway clan. This family rode its retailers with a loose rein, and with it one could be happy and at ease. "Uncle Billy" Steinway was still alive then, a stout, merry-hearted German with blond slicked-back hair and a wife that nobody ever met; and still alive too, was the kindly but aloof Theodore. These folk, for whom the word *gemütlich* seemed to have been coined, had in abundance the qualities of grace and of caring, and perhaps this was the result of their upbringing. All the boys were educated at good schools, but after that spent four years laboring in the factory.

"The first time I saw Hank Steinway," Ed Bahrein once remarked to me, referring to the man who is now President of the firm, "he was down there in the pit, in the foundry that they used to have, with goggles on, stripped to the waist and covered with sweat and grime."

With the Steinways, as with Martine's, everything strove to be first class, and from them I got lessons in excellence and quality. Since their product was a quality line, no dealer got all his living from it, and the Steinways themselves were not rolling in gelt, as were for instance, George Stapeley of Everett's or the yacht-owning rajahs at Winter and Wurlitzer. Like publishers who have to give their writers either money or lovin', they concentrated on the lovin', and their dealers seemed to respond in kind.

I drifted around then, like a less articulate and less gifted Henry Adams, the eternal observer and non-participant, like a crown

prince sweating out a regency, honored but not sought after, seated above the salt but denied access to the sugar.

Arrived back at the store, I took my place at the credit desk once more, and was still there a year later, when in the Summer of 1951, I grew restless and asked to be transferred to the Piano Department.

This realm was presided over by Tel Matross, a tall hatchet-faced *grand seigneur*, a superb salesman of fine pianos but committed to the comforting but costly belief that salesmen are born, not made. Like Delph before him, he stirred nary a finger to train me, and part of this may have stemmed from his active dislike of me; to him I was another Albert Junior, another mustang roaming loose on the spread with nary a hobble or lariat upon me. It was in the mustang spirit then, that I futzed around the Piano Department, trying to memorize prices and styles, picking up what pointers I could from the flyers and brochures put out by the makers. I knew nothing of the fine art of salesmanship, nor even that such an art existed.

Once more, I had driven down a dead-end street; but then, as though to confirm my belief that I had always been fed by the ravens, that if I sat by the riverside long enough, a boat would come drifting by; in the Fall of 1951, the Hammond Organ Company of Chicago foisted upon its more-or-less willing dealers, what it termed the Church Music Survey.

The decree went forth from Caesar on Diversey Street, that every dealer who valued his franchise would adopt Hammond's "suggestion" that he visit every church in his territory and survey its potential need for an organ. At this time, Martine's had a handsome exclusive territory which stretched from Dallas County north to the Red River and east to Louisiana. Now however, Hammond was making growling noises in its throat not only about the survey, but also about letting out the rich East Texas fief to a dealer in Tyler. In a sweat of panic, Mr. M. called me in to undertake the survey and to save his precious territory. To me, fretting about bored, lonely and rejected on the piano floor, it was May, 1942 again; the open road beckoned once more; and those far-away places with the strange-sounding names — Clarksville, Bonham, Mineola and Longview — were calling, calling me.

I inherited a company car, a vintage Olds sedan from some piano tuner, and armed with a briefcase full of sales material, started out on my travels.

Taking one county at a time, I covered them all, visiting organists, ministers, priests and rabbis alike, shunning only the Churches of Christ, which banned instrumental music in the sanctuary. I was not on a sales mission, but rather on a prospect-hunt, and wherever I went, told the Hammond story as best I could and left a wake of

brochures behind me.

Until I got to the outer reaches of the territory. I went out from Dallas in the morning and drove back late in the afternoon. I would zip along Highway 289 from Sherman at sunset on autumn afternoons, seeing the shadow of the car tracking me, myself alone on the little two-lane road and, "Solitary traveller," I would say aloud, feeling like a wandering knight or perhaps one of Thomas Hardy's reddlemen plodding across the moors toward some bucolic Sophoclean destiny.

I kept a loaf of bread along with a jar of peanut butter and one of jelly in the turtle-back, and then like any other conniving, expense-account-padding salesman, dutifully jotted down "Lunch, 95¢" in my notebook for reimbursement later on. Even here, I felt I was hewing to the Organization-Man line; in my collection work, where in plowing the fields for hidden P. and L.'s I had unearthed many a jar of treasure, I had kept not a crying dime for myself; but this I felt, was "business" and befitted a newly arrived executive. All during this time, of course, country-club memberships, hunting safaris in Africa and the rental of yachts for customers' Mediterranean cruises were being cheerfully expensed and almost as cheerfully accepted by the I.R.S., so that if you want to find a moral in this story it may well be, "Never steal small amounts of money."

I toiled on then, all that Fall and Winter and into the next Spring, and my reports continued to pile up, disregarded, in the closet near my old desk in the advertising office. Perhaps it was this neglect, along with having worked three years without either raise or praise, that finally caused the roof, ever so gently, to begin caving in on me. Yes, some time in June 1952, I found myself in a clean shabby room at the Alamo Plaza in Tyler, found that I could not go on and saw myself getting up and driving over to an open-air swimming pool where I spent the day, and then went back to the motel that night where I lay for hours staring into the dark. Yes, it was January 1930 again; it was April 1943 and I was in the same town, Tyler, convulsed with grief over Dad's illness; it was early in April 1944, and "I've got this pain, right here"; only now I had no pain, but only the old sense of remoteness, of being whirled away into space, of disembodiment and disassociation.

I came on to Dallas in a day or so and wandered around for a week or more, and the word went out, "Has anybody seen Loki around here lately?" I was reporting in to home at night, but spending my days at the swimming pool out at Vickery lolling around, wondering who I was and where, and then finally went into Mr. M.'s office and had a long and bitter argument with him, at the end of which he got up and started toward the door, saying, "Well, Loki,

you never seem to have found your niche around here.” Years later, but not then, I thought of the reply which I should have made, “I’ve found it, all right — but you’re in it.”

The very next day I started out for Martine’s in the green Olds, but soon enough noted that the car was bearing me, not down Turtle Creek Boulevard and then into Cedar Springs on the way downtown, but rather, northwest along Highway 114, in the direction of Amarillo, and of Woodland Park, Colorado.

# # #

"July 23rd. Woodland Park. Dear Loki arrived. All in. Got him in bed and gave him my pills. Very uncomfortable and takes pills to make him sleep. Terrific cloud burst, and he slept.

"July 25th. Quiet all day. Fed Loki bland. Ori not complaining, writes every day . . . He is so wonderful, so refined."

Thus the diaries for part of that summer. On the day of my leaving, I had buzzed a wire back home from Grapevine, fifteen miles outside of Dallas. "Driving slowly and carefully to Woodland Park. Will call when arrive." Then, with the insane belief that somebody, Mr. M., Orianne or perhaps a contingent of U. S. Marines, would surely be following after, begging me to return, I had cagily gone the long way around, west to Lubbock and then north to Amarillo. Hounded as I was by the Furies, I could not stop for the night, but alternately drove two or three hours at a stretch, cat-napped by the side of the road and then took off again.

I came into Woodland Park late the following afternoon, and of course Mother was flabbergasted to see me, and as her diaries reveal, promptly took me under the maternal wing to shelter me from the storm.

After a week or so of mooning around Woodland Park, "I've got to go down to Dallas now, and get my job back," I said resolutely, and once arrived home, went to see Mr. M. With my earlier resignation in hand though, he knew a good thing when he saw it; and around noon, I walked out the side-entrance into Ritson Street, jobless, and feeling let out of Paradise.

I drifted about the streets then, for a week or so, in the process making a few trips to a psychiatrist who gave me neither cure nor solace; and then, in another attempt to Go Home Again, as I had done ten years before, went to Washington and sponged off John and Nora Brandon while I made the rounds of government offices. Nothing came of this, neither then nor later, and after I returned home, the Texas Unemployment Commission rooted out a temporary job for me with the firm of Van Waters and Rogers. This was a chemical sales outfit on Denton Drive out near Field Circle, and for a couple of weeks I sat in the office bull-pen, making little notations



on big sheets of paper, keeping some kind of inventory control. Rick was almost four then, and Orianne would bring him out to watch the switch engines or the delivery trucks until it got to be time to bring me home.

This was in the Autumn of 1952, at a time when Adlai Stevenson was running for President. In Dallas, old politico Bill Kettle along with Arch and Patsy Banks was active in Adlai's campaign, and in the course of it had rented some space at the State Fair of Texas. I was selected, at the highly welcome stipend of a hundred a week, to operate it, and this I did happily for the middle fortnight in October. I was in charge of volunteer workers who manned a Quonset hut, set out near the Esplanade opposite the Electric Building. It was equipped with a loudspeaker and bales of campaign literature, with a water cooler and counters where the faithful could congregate to pass out folders, meet their friends and argue politics.

In a burst of ingenuity, I got four or five empty Mason jars from beneath our sink, snipped out a hole in the covers and glued them to the counter. "Campaign Fund" I labelled them, and at the end of the two weeks, turned in a couple of thousand dollars to an astounded Kettle, who pressed two hundred of it back into my sweating and but not unwilling palm as a bonus.

From then until the election on Tuesday November 4th, I ran about town as an unpaid campaign worker, in a French Army Scout car which was owned by H. R. Dildredge, distributing literature here and there, making speeches, and doing what I could to further the cause. Back in September I had got a nibble on a job with the Attorney General working on Indian claims, and in some twisted fashion, thought that getting it depended on winning the election for Stevenson. Well, the world knows the result of the campaign; and early on Wednesday morning, the 5th, I wandered out the back door and forlornly kicked the tires on H. R.'s aged vehicle which still bore its Algerian license plates. A phrase, "The air was like that in a losing campaign headquarters on the morning after the election," kept running through my head.

After that, finding to my amazement and despair that I could not slip back easily into clerical work of some kind, I applied for and began drawing unemployment compensation. For the next month I odd-jobbed around town, driving Orianne to and from the Christmas job she had selling children's wear at Young Ages, preparing gesso panels for the art classes at the Museum and assembling a snapshot album for the Martines. For the gesso boards I received twenty-five dollars, and a like sum for the album. Loki Tay, "so wonderful, so refined," was having hell's own time finding himself a job.

Still hanging in there though. I scanned the want ads, and answered a call for credit manager at Shaw's Jewelry Store and another for night watchman at the Melba Theater. At Shaw's, it was felt that my experience at Martine's had not put me in touch with the "lower class of people who make up our customers"; and at the Melba, I was not less mercifully informed. "We just don't feel that a man of your experience would feel at home here."

As the first of December drew near, mindful of the old days when I had delivered parcel-post during the holidays at Amarillo, I went to the Post Office and applied for a job as mailman. Still holding a commercial operator's license from my days at Martine's, I duly made out some forms, and after taking a truck driver's test along Industrial Boulevard, was assigned to parcel post delivery in Oak Cliff.

However, Mr. M. got wind of this, and to save the family honor, on the day before I was to report for duty, offered me a Christmas job in the Record Department. There I ran around for three weeks, waiting on the trade, wrapping packages, going out to the distributors for fresh shipments, running up to the office for change, and stirring around amidst the throngs of people who jammed the narrow aisle.

This was my occupation then, at a salary of around fifty dollars a week, until Christmas; but before sunset on that Holy Day, two events occurred which were to shape my life for years to come.

The first of these was in the form of a package which arrived by parcel-post on the 22nd of the month. It measured about twelve inches by twelve, not thick but swaddled heavily in cardboard, and bearing the electrifying return address of Folkways Records and Service Company, 165 West 46th Street, New York City, N. Y.

I came home to find it propped up on the mantelpiece, and "God," I whispered, going up to it and worshipping it a while before daring to open it, "God, this must be it. I thought Moe had forgotten."

About fifteen months before that, Moe Asch had been at the Hotel Adolphus at a conference of music teachers. I had heard of him and of his Folkways Records line, and was quick to look him up at his booth on the mezzanine floor.

I got along with him at once. Moe was a man of medium height, hairy, and built like a Turkish wrestler, with big hunched shoulders, restless dark eyes and a hooked Old-Testament nose. He was slow but wary in his movements, with the shambling powerful grace of a big bear. His attitude was skeptical and mocking; "That's pretty damned ethnic," he would drawl, listening to a recording of "The Mule-Skinner's Blues" by some snuff-dipping traditionalist from the

Cumberlands. He was a warm lovable person, whose Asch Records line had failed to sweep the country, but who now was building one of the world's great record catalogues of folk music.

I invited him to the house one evening, and after a few drinks and one of Orianne's good meals, perhaps her scalloped tamales with corn pone and East Texas ribbon-cane syrup, we sat in the living-room and I got out the guitar and played and sang for him. "That sounds all right," he said, and then, as if requesting a second cup of coffee, "why don't you make me a tape of old ballads and send it along to New York?"

As a member of the Royal Family, I checked out one of Martine's tape recorders on memo and brought it home. I had polished up ten traditional songs, and now, working late at night after the planes had ceased roaring overhead, got them all down on tape. They came through pretty well; by now my guitar playing had taken on a steady if unsophisticated beat and most of the imitation-Burl-Ives effects had been leached out of my voice. Now, so many months later, I sat down and slowly unwrapped the package. Inside the cardboard stuffing, gleaming up at me like the Koh-I-Noor on the hand of a ranee, was the record-cover of a ten-inch L.P.

"*Cecil Sharp Favorites from Two Continents*, sung by Loki Tay." I turned it over in my hands, drinking in the sight of the front cover, a wash drawing by David Stone Martin of two hands holding the neck of a lute, and down one side, a list of the songs: "John Peel. The Mermaid. Earl Richard. Earl of Murray. The Red Herring. Greenland Fishery. Bailiff's Daughter. A North Country Maid. King Arthur Had Three Sons. Tomorrow is St. Valentine's Day."

Now, I got out the record itself, black, shining and virgin, and with it the brochure which contained the text of the songs and some supposedly scholarly comment by the performer:

"Child's collection contains a legend on the mermaid theme, Clerk Colvill, or the Mermaid, and from Findlay's old collection of Scottish ballads we get a description of the creature herself from an eyeball witness:

Gowden glist the yellow links  
That round her neck she'd twine;  
Her een were of the skyie blue,  
Her lips did mock the wine.

The smile upon her bonnie cheek  
Was sweeter than the bee;  
Her voice excell'd the birdie's sang  
Upon the birchen tree.

The cook had probably never had it so good."

I put the record-cover on the mantelpiece once more, and then went somewhere else in the house and put the record itself on the table-model Magnavox. Mother was there, on a holiday visit from Amarillo, and stood listening to it with me.

"Son," she said when I had finished playing the record, "Son, this is just a beginning," and I tried to feel thrilled at the prospect. However, you should never try to cheer-up a neurotic, nor to console him whose grief has a purpose; and with the old feeling of despair the following day, I went back to my work at Martine's. Yes, all this time the glacial frost was creeping up around my heart. I knew that with the end of the holidays would come the end of my job. I looked back over my life: I was almost forty-five years of age and apparently could neither find work anywhere nor make any sort of living at the private practice of law. I was doomed; and the pardon in the form of the Folkways record had arrived too late. It was only in later years that I was able to see how desperate was my need for failure — for failure, as a whip to scourge me for my hostility as it issued in snobbery and arrogance, or, as I gradually worked myself up into the psychotic Big Time, my leanings toward megalomania and homicide.

As to the second event: On Christmas Eve we all gathered around the Martines' table for a big family dinner. I sat there frozen-faced, not saying a word, like a corpse exhibited at a feast, and after the opening of the family presents, went back to Hood Street. Orianne and I finished trimming the Christmas tree and then, after Rick had gone to bed, we filled the stockings which were hung by the fireplace. At daybreak our son would find them there; but I was up an hour before him and went into the bathroom and got down the bottle of sleeping pills, the ones I had been saving for months, and now I had thirty-four of them. All of these I emptied into the palm of my hand, and with a quick gesture knocked them all back and then washed them down with a couple of swigs of water. I walked into the living room then with a firm tread and pulled down *The Bible* from the shelf, flipped the pages over to "Ecclesiastes," and then leaned back in the big easy chair and began to read:

"For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. As well their love, as their hatred and envy —"

I went on reading then, staring down at the beautiful haunting cadenced prose, but through it all thinking, So This Is It; So This Is Really It; and brother, if you want to know How It Really Is, I can only say, peaceful, brother, peaceful —.

# # #

I had known Rit Bowen for a long time. He had lived at the Y. when I did, being then a reader of meters for Dallas Power and Light. From that humble and dog-ridden profession he had gone on to be a lighting engineer, which seemed to consist of cramming into any given space all the wattage which the pocketbook or the wiring of the consumer would stand. From there, he slid finally into a snug little berth with General Foods. He was a fair-haired, ruddy-faced six-footer, with a sarcastic turn of speech, and his wife, Dot, an intelligent, bright-eyed little quail who happened to be a case-worker with the Veterans Administration.

Orianne and I were fond of both of them, and had gone to dinner at their home sometime late in 1952, on an occasion when, as Dot told me later, "Loki, you seemed to have built a glass wall around yourself, so that I could see you but couldn't hear anything you said."

For the past eight years or so, my V.A. disability pension had been rolling in, boosted up now to fifty dollars or so a month, and as such a pensioner, I was still eligible for treatment. To Dot's office then, I scurried on the first Monday after Black Thursday. It was only then that I felt able to venture forth alone.

On Christmas morning I had awakened finally, to see a face bending over me, but it was not the face of my Creator. I had half-expected that it would indeed be He, an old man with a Walt Whitman beard and the massive but kindly features of the English actor C. Aubrey Smith. No, instead it was Spike Angrist who was peering at me, saying something like, "Here, drink this," and then, later, "Let's see if we can't get him up and walking around, just put his arm over my shoulder; that's right." I got up, and with his help somehow made it to the bathroom. I was wildly dizzy as though from a dozen hang-overs; the room tilted and swung through space like the Funny-House at the State Fair and my head rang like a bronze bell in the temple gardens of Kyoto.

It must have been a sorry Christmas for everybody concerned. Although my wife did not say so then, my gesture had brought her long-simmering rage and disgust to a boil. In the Martine mystique, illness or debility of any kind was looked upon as a not-be-borne

imposition. They never spoke of ailments other than their own, and indeed, all the time that my brother and then my father were so ill, I never heard one inquiry after their health. Still, I concluded, this Spartan attitude was, on balance, wildly successful, as I observed every member of the family continuing to lead a charmed, Camelotian existence, where sometimes unpleasant, but never tragic, things were ever allowed to happen.

Orianne then, gloomed about the house, and Mother also, her diary entry for the day being, "Black Thursday. Dear Loki on the brink." I had got some ties for presents, and later that afternoon, after re-joining the living, I sat on the couch with the ties draped around my neck and watched Rick play with his toys. I felt like someone who has just come back from a Thirty Years War, back to a place where everything is familiar but not yet in perspective. Two days later, Orianne and I drove up to the Safeway store a few blocks away at Lemmon and Welborn, and I stayed outside in the car while she went in to shop. Pietro Alberti the photographer and his wife Erin had invited us to a party that night, and by this simple invitation I felt wanted and loved as never before. I gazed up at the washed cold blue of the sky and felt alive again, alive and determined to live. The following Monday, as I have said, I went down to the V.A. and looked up Dot Bowen.

"We aren't taking on many people for intensive care." Her tone was concerned and motherly. "Still, I'll introduce you to Dr. Brennan and see if something can't be arranged."

Larry Brennan, M.D., was a tall, handsome, wide-shouldered, black-haired man with the relaxed and faintly superior air of a customer's man in a successful brokerage firm. Now, seated in his office, he looked over at me with a red-lipped smile.

"Well," he said, leaning back in an upholstered aluminum swivel chair, "maybe we can do something, here — make you a little more comfortable."

"Hell with that," I snapped back, amazed at my own outburst, "I don't want to be just more comfortable; I want to get out of the way I've been living; and if I can't do that, I'll just go back home and die."

There was a moment's pause. Without knowing it, I had cleared the highest hurdle, that of being strongly motivated, or at least saying that I was; so without much more ado I was accepted as an outpatient and told to report three times a week for psycho-therapy.

Well, that front was secured; now, to see about the securing of another. At Martine's, I toiled back up the steps to the mezzanine and cornered my father-in-law once more. I told him how it was with me, and that I needed a job, just any job, that would allow me

to go for treatment three times a week.

"Loki," he said, fixing me with his shrewd level gaze and perhaps still troubled by the prospect of his son-in-law's wrestling mail sacks in Oak Cliff; "Loki, I'm for you, right or wrong; and yes, you can begin work here again. Of course all we've got right now is a job in the office, two-fifty a month, but if you're interested —"

"That's all right," I said, relieved. I had started out two and a half years ago at five hundred, but now, I was in no mood nor position to argue, and so I signed on once more with the old firm.

Now, somebody else sat at the credit desk, and I scurried about, reading the registers with Jimmy Routh or lending Reg Davenport a hand down in the Record Department.

One of my jobs was to audit the cash from the floor sales, counting out the change from each clerk's sack and comparing it with the register totals. Some days I could do this and some days I couldn't.

"I've got to go home now," I would say, and can remember one of the office girls snickering as she heard me, "got to go home," and I would dash out the door, leaving the pennies scattered over the top of the desk.

Now, my desk was just outside Mr. M.'s private office, and once more I felt that I was living back on Madison Street, sleeping once more at the foot of Daddy's bed.

On the days when I went to Dr. Brennan, I would arrive at the store around nine-thirty in the morning, after Orianne had driven me downtown, and in late afternoon I would ride back home with Mr. M., who would thus have a chance to play for a while with his grandson.

I have not made much mention of my son during all these years, but from the first he had become, as his namesake before him, part of my very soul.

"Rick likes to climb up and down stairs," I wrote to Mother in the early years; "he cracked his noggin mightily twice this afternoon, falling backward down a flight of steps right in front of General Robt. E. Lee. He shakes his head from side to side till he's dizzy, meanwhile giggling at me as he lies in his crib; he sits on the potty and hiccups and then giggles to himself; he says, 'Baw Woom' which must mean 'bathroom.' I stamp my feet and run after him and he runs away from me and hides; I throw him on the couch and he bounces and then turns on his side and slides down to the floor and comes running with his arms outstretched to be thrown again. He gets spells when he won't lie still to be changed, and cries when his mouth is being wiped, and sometimes when we swat him. Then, he ducks his head

coily and looks at us roguishly from beneath his eyebrows. He cries going up and down elevators, and usually shrinks away from strangers."

In 1953 he was five years old, and had long since been romping around in the park, playing catch and touch-football with me and riding his tricycle up and down the sidewalks. He was a handsome, well-set-up, dark-eyed, long-headed boy, raised, to Orianne's sorrow, in a neighborhood where there were no children to play with, but instead a plethora of fond-smiling elderly women to make-over him. His lack of playmates gave him plenty of time to play with me, and we had some wonderful times together.

"Judo!" we would yell at each other, chopping away and then doubling up in simulated agony; or, "It's the fight in the dark with knives!" we would mutter, stalking each other in the darkened bedroom with pillows.

"Now you boys quit that, you're breaking down the bed again." It would be Orianne calling out from her salad-making in the kitchen, and my son and I would go happily on with our rough-house.

Then too, along in here somewhere, we began calling each other "Joe."

All that of course, along with the "psychiatric garbage," I relayed to my imperturbable shaman, crouching in his little office thrice weekly, trying to put the shattered bits of my life back together in new pattern. His office was small, perhaps ten by fourteen, furnished in Government-Office-Green, with no pictures on the wall and only a morgue-like radiance from the neon tubing overhead. There was a couch but I chose not to lie on it, which I considered some sort of mean and petty triumph from the start. I sat instead in the visitor's chair, facing Dr. Brennan across the corner of his desk.

I suppose first of all, we went into the events of Christmas morning. I do not recall what we said about it then, but now, it occurs to me that it was not much of a suicide attempt. Still, I supposed it was better than no suicide attempt at all; and if it had succeeded, I would have been in the enviable position of facing my Maker at the Judgment while still clutching one of the most widely admired examples of His very own prose. ("Oh, you *liked* that, did you? Well, well, now —.")

Dr. Brennan and I faced each other then, and I learned early not to try charming him with what I came to call "card tricks," not to entertain him, nor to allow myself the fantasy that I was presenting him with fabulous gifts — free pianos, or fur-lined greatcoats against the cold. In that connection, I recalled the old story that smart boutiques in Vienna used to display a sign in their windows, "Gifts For All Stages of the Transference."



We went into the matter of dreams of course, and here I came up with what I thought was a novel and useful device. I rigged up a tape recorder at the bedside, and upon awakening in the night, would turn away from my wife's warm and fragrant side to mumble my dream into the mike. Then at my next appointment, I would relate the dream as best I could recall it, and then, turning on the recorder, see what part of it had been suppressed. I could then set to work on the suppressed material, throwing away the fish and eating the plank, as the old joke had it.

Of course, I dredged up all the old, recurrent dreams, the flying one, and the one of the glamorous foreign land, along with the fright-and-screaming ones, the nightmares. One example of this period showed me in a new, sleek sports car, perhaps a wire-wheeled T.D., slewing it from side to side down a dusty highway, scattering gravel on the crowds that lined the roadside. Later, much later, when I dreamed instead that I was operating an adding machine, performing a humble but constructive task, I knew that some light was beginning to show at the end of the tunnel, that I was getting better, or at least more operative.

Insofar as depressions were concerned, although somewhat tempered at that time by the use of Dexamil, they continued to be-devil me for years. Still, I never had another real go at suicide, although once, during 1955, I had a narrow escape. In a profound fit of gloom one day at the office I planned to take a company car and run it into the divided-highway underpass at the intersection of Loop 12 and Lawther Drive. I faked a collection trip to Garland so that my death would be compensable as occurring in the course of my employment, and announced my purpose and destination in loud and specific terms. I had my hat and briefcase, and my hand was on the knob of the stairwell door when I was called back to the phone.

It was Mauri Seibert, who once more asked me to do a gig for one of her parties. Well God, I thought, after I had accepted and had put down the phone, perhaps I've got something to live for after all, and put my hat back on the rack and sat down once more to work.

Early in the game, I had told Dr. Brennan about his colleague Dr. Winstead and of his reference to "all this homosexual business." I told him that I had never experienced any impulse, or any overt one at any rate, in this direction, and probably never would, but that still I was bothered by Winstead's remark, and wondered idly what it would be like just to go through an Experience. God knows it would have been easy enough, to set up a date in Lee Park at any time. "What if —"

"You'd never make it," drawled Dr. Brennan. "your conscience would beat you to death. Now, if you'll begin to think less about that and more about constructive ways to channel *all* your hostilities, you can begin to show some improvement."

So the treatment rocked along, and I with it. Gradually over the months, I took on more duties at Martine's and even screwed my courage up to the point where I could go out and make a few collections. Then in September 1953, two things happened which were milestones in what I was beginning to laughingly refer to as my career. I signed up for an accounting course in S.M.U.'s night school, Dallas College, and met, or rather remet, Karen Bofors.

I do not know what made me go back to college; perhaps a desire to a return to happier days; perhaps ambition; perhaps the need for neurotic activity, the wayward urge to act-out rather than to work-through. At any rate there I was, with my hatred of figures and of anything which demanded precision, floundering around in a class in accounting taught by the stocky, efficient, no-nonsense Mrs. Otho. I got through both the fall and spring semesters by dint of much midnight, and so far as that goes, early-daylight oil, earning a C and making a good friend in the process.

Curt Leverett was a stocky blue-eyed Irishman who possessed a flair for living and had formerly been a Little Theater director in Upper State New York. His family had come to Texas, adventuring, where he had wound up in a minor job, "counting nickels," as he expressed it, at the gas company. In the class, he was an apt pupil who easily surpassed me; his wife Vi was pert and striving also, and their little boy Kim was the same age as our Rick. We all became friends from the start. I wangled a managerial position for Curt at the library, and over the years Vi became a folk singing pupil of mine who found no difficulty in out-stripping her teacher both as a guitarist and as a composer and singer of topical songs.

All that was in the future, as I went down on North Akard one balmy night in mid-September 1953, to sign on for the course; and also in the future, but coming up fast, was Trouble at the Pass in the office of Dr. Brennan.

— — —

"transference. Psychoanal. a. reproduction of emotions, esp. those experienced in childhood toward a person other than the one toward whom they were initially experienced. b. displacement."

— — —

"displacement. Psychoanal. the transfer of an emotion from the object about which it was originally experienced to another object or a person."

— — —

Well, that was the way it was supposed to work; you transferred, displaced, or what the hell, your childhood rages-loves-and-hates to your therapist and then started "working-through"; that is, if neither your psyche nor your checking account blew a gasket in the process.

— — —

"Gail Lindquist, college graduate, only not of Texas University, but of some place in Southern California, some hick school you never heard of, one of those places where the head of the English Department coaches girls' basketball, heads up dramatics (*As You Like It* and *Charley's Aunt*), and spends his summer vacations on his father-in-law's farm. A rangy, limed-oak blonde, negligently dressed, sometimes with a delicate white pimple or two on her face (when she had had a fighting letter from her mother, as I was later to find out), a small pointed chin, not much jaw to speak of, but with (as I was also to find later) knots of formidable Calvinistic muscles along the jaw line, a small wart on one cheek, the loveliest gray eyes you have ever seen, and a fine mind. All this, together with a light, soaring, I've-saved-the-last-dance-for-you voice, if you can still say that sort of thing without having people compare you to F. Scott Fitzgerald."

For many years, I had held the fantasy that I possessed a magic ring, set with a touchstone which would light up whenever I met some walk-on who at a later time would play a leading role in my life. If I had owned such a dandy little prognosticator at the time I worked at Martine's back in December 1952, it would have been flashing on and off like a traffic light at three A.M. For reasons which will soon appear, the description of Gail Lindquist which I have just quoted was tailor-made for a sheet-music clerk named Karen Bofors.

At that time, in December, 1952, the Record Department had recruited her from the sheet music stacks to bear a hand with the Christmas traffic. There, in the *mêlée*, I had met and frequently bumped non-committal butts with her, but as soon as the holidays were over she had gone elsewhere, and I thought no more about her, having, as we have seen, other things on my mind.

Now, nine months later, in September 1953, she was put back on the payroll, and as the month wore on, I found more and more pressing business in the choral-music stacks down in the basement.

Karen's father was a professor of religion, and a lay minister for some obscure apocalyptic splinter-group, one which had a commitment to pre-destination and a sneaking regard for the burning of heretics. Karen considered herself seriously as a pianist, and having, like Tangee Todhunter, a fond and prosperous grandmother, was enabled to take an expensive lesson once a week in the studios of Demian Foxx on the third floor.

Oftentimes Karen and I would go out for coffee at Joe Yee's chop-suey parlor over on Main Street, and had many a top-lofty and intellectual bull-fest. She did me the great favor of introducing me to the works of Friedrich Nietzsche; she was forever quoting him and his Apollonian and Dionysian principles, and I sensed that she was beginning to weary of the former without being quite ready to take on the latter.

Then one day, sitting in the dim-lit booth that was redolent of soy-bean sauce and chicken chow-mein, we fell silent, and looking at her I had the old fatal feeling, and knew that however unwittingly, once more someone had "coost the glamourye o'er me."

At first, it promised to be lovely fun. (Lo, there is dancing in the streets, and already the fountains run wine.) "You'll see, now, how I fall in love," I trilled fatuously to Dr. Brennan at some session near the first of October, and he smiled a grim and enigmatic smile but said nothing.

All through most of September and into October I slogged on, ass-deep in love and accounting, in therapy and the Martine Music Company, and during the nightly recess at Dallas College, stood outside on Akard Street looking up at KRLD's TV Tower and its red warning lights — who was it they were warning, and against what? — and day-dreamed of Karen.

I found soon enough that this was going to be another Mavis McLean production, only this time with elephants, chariot races and a cast of thousands. Now, I found to my dismay that I had-to-had-to see her every day, to tattoo her gestures on my heart, to touch her, to hear that wonderful laugh for all that it was often scornful, just once again. One night in a fit of desperation I phoned her and she met me outside her house and went with me to an ill-lit side-street, where we sat and talked for hours.

"It's so different being up here in the front seat, instead of back there battling for my virtue," she said, primly pulling her skirt over her knees and telling me about some of the men who had asked for her hand in marriage. Nothing else happened, either then or later, of

a sexual nature, and that night after taking her home I drew her to me and held her, giving her a short and bitter kiss on the cheek: "Oh *Karen!*" I cried, and she got out of the car without a word and walked up to the door alone.

All of this and more I faithfully related to my smiling impassive Buddha at the V.A. and then later in October, I Knew What I Had To Do. Other men, feeling this, strapped on their guns and walked out into High Noon; in the Arctic, the doomed English explorer said laconically, "I may be some time," and strolled out of the tent and to his death in the snow. I, oh God I, went down to see Mrs. Grahame and by some base strategem induced her to fire Karen, forthwith and point-blank. I then went home and stayed in bed for a week, convulsed with cramps and weeping, like a dope fiend taking the cure cold-turkey.

It was the most wrenching and perhaps the most crucial decision of my life, and Karen must have been shocked and then relieved, for in all this, she herself had not come off scot-free.

Although now skeptical of the tenets of her religion, nevertheless she had grown up with it, and here she was, twenty-two and attached emotionally to a married man of forty-five. Every morning, she told me, after breakfast, she would go to the bathroom and be violently sick; thankfully, this no longer occurred when she was cut loose from Martine's and began taking little jobs here and there around town, in Titcher's Gift Shop or in a dean's office at S.M.U.

At some point I had introduced her to my friend, bookseller Dion Rexroth and he had taken her to dinner a couple of times and to a show here and there. Now, when the fit was on me, I would repair to Dion's bookstore on Routh Street, just to wander through the stacks in near-hysteria, just to talk to somebody about Karen, just to hear somebody call her name. Dion put up with this as best he could, and our friendship survived in spite of it.

Dr. Brennan's reaction was less sympathetic, but more to the point. Just after the firing incident, I showed up at the V.A., red-eyed but still walking and talking, for what had then become my daily session.

"Meet The Champ," I said, and told him what I had done.

"You mean The *Chump*," he said, and as usual, I had no reply.

At Martine's from my window overlooking Ritson Street I would watch every Thursday afternoon to see her come into the building for her weekly lesson; and I continued to dream about her. In one night-vision, she was striding up and down just outside a city bus which was parked in front of the State Fair Music Hall. She was bearing a huge parade-sign with a strange device: "THIS IS REALLY HEALTHY." I continued to wallow in day-dreams as well,

fancying that I had shot myself to death on her doorstep at dawn, or that it was she who was really serving under the lash, that she was in love with some twelve-year old schoolboy: "Then by God," I told the doctor with a vengeful smirk, "she would be the one who would have to follow somebody else around town like a God-damned dog, would have to hang around the schoolhouse just to see him come out into the yard to play."

"Who's the twelve year old boy?" I was then asked, and I laughed hysterically for ten minutes or so at the non-funny reply.

One day while in a highly disturbed state, I broke down and told Orianne "the whole sordid story," and she came at me swinging, and I got her down on the floor and started to choke her to death, but then pretty soon let her up, and of course went to bed with another three-day spell.

"Next time you feel like telling your wife about your lady-love," suggested Dr. Brennan, "don't do it. Just get a two-by-four and work her over with it. That's what you're doing, in effect, anyway; it would be more honest, and in a way, more gentle."

All this time, I was twisting and turning like a tarpon on the hook, and in my desperation turned to another old love of mine, my writing. Yes, in December 1953, one Sunday while wandering about the house in a deep-purple depression I found myself setting up the tape recorder in the livingroom and then, lying on the couch and holding the little hand-mike up before my face, in a voice that sounded on playback like that of a man strangling in his own blood, I began to dictate:

"In those days, if you were Order of the Coif, you were a sixty-dollar-a-month man; if you were not, and just fresh out of law school, you were glad to put in your first months free for the experience. It was in Dallas, then, and in the Thirties, and I was putting in my first six months free, but was not glad about it."

# # #

Wickes is a wide place in the road near the Oklahoma line, about halfway between Texarkana and Ft. Smith. This is Arkansas Hill Country, and the Cossatot and Kiamichi Mountains are not too far away. It is a sparsely-populated wooded area, a land of clear cool streams, of sawmills, truck farms and broiler houses.

Just six miles out of Wickes, west through fence-rows lined with scrub pine and wild raspberry bushes, lies a bog and a spring, and in former times, the Bog Springs Hotel. Since 1945, Orianne and I had been going there for summer vacations, as a welcome relief from the hot two-day trek to Woodland Park. Here in the roomy old two-story long-house, built of whitewashed pine planking and furnished with creaking iron bedsteads and emaciated mattresses, she could re-live some of her giddy childhood days at Baker Springs. "Baker" had been a similar caravanserai not too far distant but long since turned back to the bramble bushes and the blue-jays.

Here at Bog Springs, we could drowse away the hours, listening to the mountain brook that tinkled over the rocks or playing dominoes or Pig; here we could enjoy Mrs. Smith's fried pork, and her shortcake made with wild berries which we had picked that very morning. And here, late in the summer of 1954, I finished my fourth novel.

*The By-Paths of Chaos* I called it, after a quotation from that philosopher of whose name the reader is beginning to tire. Like my other attempts at fiction, it had a simple plot, but unlike any of them, this book was written on two levels, or planes. On the horizontal plane, concerned with incident and narrative, with stark happenings, it was the story of a few months in the life of one Paul Cotton.

Paul is a young lawyer, sitting bored and poverty-stricken in his law office high up in the Santa Fe Building in downtown Dallas. He yearns, or rather thinks he yearns, for status and success, but as the book opens we find him deep in study, not of torts, but rather of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*. Like Romeo, he is in love, but not with the heroine; rather he is in-love-with-love, and at the moment seems to have a hard-on for a waitress named Little Red who works at the Y.M.C.A.

On the other plane, that of the vertical, it is the story of Paul's soul-wrenching affair with the artist Gail Lindquist (for whom read, "Karen Bofors"). This is the story of Paul's search, not for success but for a soul; and here we see him as the anti-hero, tortured, bitter and cynical, one whose redemption, at the end of the book, is hinted at as lying in the field of psycho-therapy rather than in the prospect of a membership in the Dallas Country Club.

The style was hard-bitten, epigrammatic and incisive, and highly charged with hostility, envy, tears and passion. Woven into the plot were, variously, Indian wrestling with my true-love on the banks of Turtle Creek, Rod Bentzen, the law offices of Tewk Jackson, various attorneys whom I had known in practice, courthouse repartee and folk say, sexual impotence, Karen's nausea, a shooting, and just for the hell of it, an attempt at suicide.

As I have indicated, I dictated most of it onto the tape recorder, and Ves Kowalski, a former neighbor of ours and by then a student at S.M.U. typed it for me at a dollar an hour. In September, I bundled it all up and shipped it to New York: From p.r. man Gil Keck, I had the name of an agent there, one Aka Burnside, and having entrusted it to his hands and having also written it all out of my system, I settled down to wait.

Meanwhile it was Autumn again, a season of excitement and promise, one which has always seemed to me a Time of Beginning Again, perhaps an atavistic reminder of the opening of the fall semester at college. September, 1954; by which time I had long since laid, if not Karen Bofors, then at least her ghost; and was ready for other faces, other rooms.

Some of these I found soon after I had stood in line once more on the sidewalk outside Dallas College, with Martine's tuition check in my hip-pocket, waiting to enroll in a course in Marketing. In the Spring, I had got through my second semester in Accounting with much labor, having heard much of debit-and-credit, of journal-entry and of balance sheet, but evermore coming out by the same door as in I went.

Now all that was past, as I settled back happily into Academe-proper once more, into the familiar world of rote-learning. My professor of Marketing was a balding, rotund little man of about my age, with bulging eyes and a hyperthyroid attitude toward life. He was a verbal chain-stitcher; words ran from his mouth like water in a mill-race, as we studied the various levels of distribution and such matters as the distinction between factor and broker, between consignment and sale.

From him, and later on in other courses, from such high-voltage chaps as Conrad Bomar and Frank Diller I learned if I did not get



to practice, the arts of retailing and sales management; but all the time, although I did not know it, I was learning still another art, one which I shall mention when the time comes.

At Martine's as I have said, I gradually assumed more duties, and as I did so, my salary finally climbed back to where it originally was. I was even issued some company stock, and every Christmas I could look forward to a bonus of three or four hundred dollars. Like any good bureaucrat, I built my empire as best I could, moving back into the saddle in the Credit Department, and by the simple expedient of glass-enclosing the space around my desk, got myself a private office. I ordered up a deep-pile beige rug and some Steinway Centennial wallpaper, painted the file cabinets a dusty pink, and acquired some new blond wood furniture. I conned Ardis Doyle, who was not only a piano tuner and flamenco guitarist but a superb cabinet maker as well, into going to the piano shop, probably over the dead body of Mr. Matross, and whipping up for me a dandy little side-cabinet into which I put my directories and credit books. Into the cabinet also went a 45 rpm record player which I memo-ed from Rink Eppler and some easy-listening music which I got from Reg Davenport. With that and an *alto-relievo* head of Rick which Octavio Medillin had done in green terra cotta some years before, I had as chi-chi a little set-up as anybody could desire. Here I reigned supreme for a year or so, performing not only my credit work but taking on also the recruiting of personnel and the monthly posting of Mr. M.'s precious Private Ledger. Like an old promoter though, who is interested in getting things set up and then walking away, I looked around for an assistant, or a successor, really and was not long in finding one.

Katie Browning had come into the office in February 1953, in the humble role of switchboard operator, but with her training in bookkeeping was soon boosted up into some sort of office job. I began training her in credit work, taking her to R.M.C.A. luncheons and sending her on collection trips. She was a wiry and winsome little brunette of about thirty, with a tight permanent and a brave smile. Thinking of her I was often reminded of Barry Benefield's novel of the 1930's, *Valiant is the Word for Carrie*, and in truth she was that, always smiling and devoted, never complaining and a woman of infinite discretion.

After putting Katie in charge, I moved out of my beautiful little office and she moved in, while I hustled about the store at first one and then the other task. In the course of this I reorganized although I was never in charge of, the Record Department, wholesaling or auctioning off the old 78's and putting in new shelves and racks for the L.P.'s, the 45's and the tapes which were beginning to flood the

market.

Out at Van Waters and Rogers in 1952, I had encountered for the first time a company lunch-room; and now one day at Martine's, seeing Ella Dayton crouched back of a counter in the Record Department, eating her lunch like a dog in an alley. I cottoned onto a vacant studio on the third floor, and with Mr. M.'s blessing and the help of my friend Stu Argyle, installed chairs and tables, a Frigidaire, and a Monel-metal stove and sink. I put in a big coffee urn, and with the air of an admiral ordering rum 'round the fleet, decreed free coffee for all hands.

About this time also, I sold my old faithful Ford V-8 sedan to Rink Eppler and took on a monster in its stead. It was a blue and white Country Sedan, another Ford and another V-8, but an air-conditioned station wagon equipped with a Thunderbird engine. In this contrivance which had been conceived in an evil hour and built by maladroit cretins with my destruction in mind, I careened about the country-side, burning up gas like the pilot of a P-38 and cursing the hour both it and I were born. Yes, as though in punishment for my sins, this car was a lemon, the first and thankfully the last, I have ever owned. But it had power, and power I was seeking; and about this time, also, I abandoned my clipped mustache and pompadour-with-part haircut, and had my hair done with a Number Two burr. I also abandoned my professorial silver-rimmed specs, and took on black horn-rims instead, feeling, as I acquired these attributes, like Caesar or like someone in a Yul Brynner role, ruthless and powerful, a terror amongst men and a devil amongst the women.

All this time also, I was slogging through psychiatry, staying with it, although by then Dr. Brennan was out of the V.A. and into private practice. At twenty dollars a crack, and five cracks a week, I was spending on him about what I was making at Martine's. I was working-through or rather, as my psychiatrist put it, "chipping away," although *with* what, and *at* what, continued to elude me. I imagine that all along he was advising me, nudging my elbow, and all along I was ignoring it. I asked him for neither diagnosis nor prognosis, and received none, other than his casual aside to Orianne that I was a borderline schizophrenic, and as we started out in 1953, that I would need about two hundred hours' treatment (which I presumed would haul me back from the border).

All this went on during 1954 and well into the Spring of 1955. By then, my savings were depleted and my pension gone (I had marched into the V.A. one day early in 1955 and manfully declared that I was well and wouldn't be needing it any more). I did not perceive that I was, rather than well, as well as I was going to allow myself to be. At any rate, one day I walked into Dr. Brennan's of-

fice in the Oak Lawn district and announced that I was through. He had already told me, "You're ready to quit when you think you are." We had some sort of final summing-up session, and I received a handshake and a reserved, knowing smile, like that on the face of the warden when a newly released con tells him that from now on he is going straight; and with a light step I strolled out into the spring sunshine.

Jac Banewicz and his wife Bev had long been neighbors of ours. He was a commercial artist who had moved his studio into a home he had bought on Hall Street, just around the corner from us. They were the owners of a TV set; and on the night of my release, as though in celebration, they invited us over to view one of the specials which were beginning to loom large on the TV landscape. The play was *Peter Pan*, the irony of which was not lost upon me, and I sat there with Orianne, and with Rick now eight, sitting on the floor at my feet and leaning up against my knees. We all looked at the play about Peter, he who wanted never to grow up but just to be a little boy and have fun. And sure enough, in less than a month, I found myself renewing my acquaintance with Dirk Brabant.

— — —

I suppose the Santa Fe Railway has to be one of the squarest of all business institutions; and the Presbyterian one of the squarest of churches. Both in Topeka and in Amarillo, as we have seen, our family had been committed to both, and in Amarillo, through both, we had met the Brabants. Clyde Brabant was one of Eddie Bowser's side-men in the Treasurer's office, a short, spare, clean-favored man who raised his kids to fear God the Father at church and Clyde the Father at home.

Clyde's wife was a handsome vivacious dark-haired woman of whom I used to have thoughts of a pleasantly base and carnal nature as she sat in the pew in front of us with her son and two daughters. Dirk, whom she and not Clyde had named, was about Rick's age, a lithe, brown-haired, gray-eyed boy with a lean and handsome face. Dirk had fooled around our house a lot, running with a gang which Rick used to shepherd about town in his terms of rustication from the Medical School, and I had even given him a violin lesson or two, and he had retaliated by beating me out in, of all things, a sonnet-writing contest at the Tri State Fair.

All that was long in the past; and now, in 1955, One Morning in May, as the old ballads have it, whom should I see approaching my front stoop but a bareheaded figure in bleached khakis and Mexican huaraches.

"Hello there, Loki."

He called in through the screen, standing there on the sidewalk with a young lad of fifteen or so behind him. I had never, I thought, seen this man before in all my life.

"Dirk Brabant, here. And this is my son Pieter."

I got up and went to the door, peering out at him, and then, "Well, Dirk. For God's sake. Come on in this house"; and I flung open the door and herded them both inside.

I have indicated that I had lost touch with him over the years, but only five years or so previously. Mother had sent me a clipping from an Iowa newspaper. "Billed In Machine Gun Theft," said the headline, and beneath it, the picture of two young men, one of them a mustachio-ed buckaroo identified as Dirk Brabant, formerly of Amarillo, Texas.

I made no mention of all that as I took Dirk and Pieter in to the house and made them known to the family, and as the day wore on and over Orianne's tight-lipped protests, installed both of them on cots out on the front porch. In the weeks to come, I heard Dirk's story; God, did I ever hear his story.

When the war first broke out in 1939, he had lost no time in joining the Canadian Air Force, and had flown with the RAF, "in those dog-goned Spitfires" (Dirk never used profanity, didn't smoke, would only sip at drinks, and politically was the most rigid of reactionaries) — "in those old crates, there was this little catch back of you that you had to release as you were getting off the ground, and it seemed you could never find it; with the Messerschmidts up above you and the ground crew yelling, 'Out on the tah-mack, men, out on the tah-mack, the buzzahds are abowt.'" He told me of his rise to the rank of Colonel, and of his decoration by Churchill after he had flown the great man to Moscow for a summit meeting with Stalin. Oh, he had engaged in intrigues "beneath the potted palms" around Shepheard's Hotel in Cairo and had smuggled gold out of Karachi in his flying boots.

He spoke also of imprisonment in Mexico, "where there ain't no habeas corpus and the best is like the worst. It's like a big hacienda; they don't feed you, and security is loose as a goose; whole families swarm in and out of the place all the time, lighting little charcoal fires, slapping tortillas, playing guitars, screwing — of course they allow *visitos conjugales*, that's where your wife or girl friend, or on different nights, both, can come in to see you and spend the night — of course if you've got money, you can pay to have a guard take you out for an evening on the town. I busted out of the joint one time; bought this guard a Pepsi Cola, and he threw his head back and was drinking it, when I gave him the old judo chop across the

throat and got out of there — of course they weren't too happy about it when they picked me up later."

All this time Dirk had been looking for a job, and then one day came home bursting with good news. He had answered an ad for an insurance executive and had walked into a great opportunity.

"Good money, I suppose?"

"Oh, sure. Twenty thousand a year, to start with."

Enough to minister to your simple needs, I thought bitterly, and drove him over to the Lakewood Addition to answer another ad, one for a roomy apartment which was for rent on the shady pleasantries of Tokalon Drive. I plunked down the deposit, a hundred dollars or so, and likewise the next day put up another one for a Hertz Rent-A-Car that he could drive to Amarillo. His daughter Judy was graduating something-cum-something from the Senior High, and the Chevrolet would furnish the Triumphal Car for the Return of the Hero. Yes, he would attend the graduating exercises, and get his long-suffering, Griselda-type wife to come back to Dallas with him.

I stood on the front porch after he had driven off, looking out over Lee Park, seeing the yellow stucco of Arlington Hall, and beyond it, up above the trees, the blue of the sky. No, in spite of certain plans we had made, Dirk and I would not go prospecting for uranium after all; no, nor smuggle gold out of Northern Chihuahua; rather we would do our prospecting right here in town, together, he and I — yes, we would exploit my rich friends, and while we were about it, perhaps my rich relatives.

I had slipped through the fence again, as in the case of Karen Bofors; I had checked my identity to somebody else; I had left the main road and was running once more wild and free, footloose and feral; yes, once again the fox was on the town — and then, a couple of days later, I got the phone call.

"Hello, Son. How's the family?" I recognized Mother's voice, and knew already that she was in Amarillo. "I suppose you've heard about Dirk? I guess you know he's up here."

"Well, sure, I know he's up there." I was beginning to get irritated. For weeks, both she and Orianne had been rending their garments over Dirk Brabant and me, pacing the battlements, tearing their hair and wailing, "Woe, Troy Town!" and I was sick of it. "All right," I said shortly, "so he's up there — so what?"

"Well, he's in jail." Mother was speaking, probably with pursed lips and in the exultant tones of someone who is bearing bad news. "Yes, in jail. It seems there was the matter of some hot checks, and —"

I could not answer her, standing there stunned and broken. Hot

checks — just a common crook, a God-damned hot check artist, a paper-hanger — and I broke into sobs and began to rage and shout; “Son of a bitch!” I said. “God damn his bastard soul to hell!” and slammed down the receiver. My plans for looting the Treasure-City of the Plains had gone glimmering; I had lost my deposit on the apartment, and my signature was still on the dotted line for all expenses connected with the car. Knowing I would find little sympathy at home, I dragged myself across the street to the Banewicz house, thinking as I went of Dirk and in addition of Cyrano, he who had died, not with the foeman’s steel in his heart but from a log of firewood being dropped on his head by some son of a bitching slob of a servant.

Jac and Bev sat me down on the sofa and fixed me a stiff drink, while I railed and stormed a while. Finally, Jac led me to the door, with Bev hovering in the background with the Loki-are-you-all-right look on her face, and stood there with me, looking out over Hall Street, and then as I left, “Tay,” he said, with his hand on my shoulder, “Tay — trouble with you is, you get carried away.”

# # #

"An amateur artist is one who has a job; a professional artist is one whose wife has a job."

This jibe was almost as true in the Dallas of the Seventies it was in the Dallas of the mid-Fifties, but in the later years there was a difference. By 1970, art galleries were springing up like bluebonnets in April, thriving or merrily going broke all over town. In 1955 though, they were of little moment.

Oh, you could get a showing at Cennsor's or Robertson's all right, provided you came from somewhere else, and "painted what you saw"; it also helped considerably if you had a European reputation and still more, if you were dead. Also by that time, artist Dan Mogel and rich-lady Betty Blane had established their Modern Times Gallery out at Preston Center, and there was Mrs. Bobbie's short-lived venture on Cedar Springs. The Museum did what it could with a rental service, but by and large, it was hard times, po' boy, for the artist in Dallas, Texas.

About this time, Orianne decided to do something to better the situation. She had sat in on some painting classes taught by Otis Grover. Otis was a white-maned, easy-mannered man of considerable distinction, a former pupil of Boardman Robinson's at Colorado Springs. Under the tutelage of this soft-voiced but hard-headed teacher, she had learned, in her own words, "to turn out one dandy little third-rate Grover after the other," and so had finally given it up. She continued to sketch though, and on occasion, with my assistance turned out her own lithographs on the hand-press which the Museum still kept in the basement. There one day, upon hearing Otis complain that there was no place in Dallas where an artist could show his work, she decided to open her own art gallery.

Our house, with its twelve-foot ceilings and weathered pine walls was a natural. She stripped the wallpaper off and stretched brown burlap over the boards in its place. Now, she could drive an eight-penny nail in anywhere and pull it out again with nary a trace; a couple of windows were blocked off, some picture lights were purchased and installed, and sometime in 1956 she announced her first showing.

By this time, the cocktail-party opening had been a feature of the

other two contemporary galleries, and Orianne was quick to follow suit. I cannot recall the details of that first opening, but the pattern was quickly established, and in the years to come, remained about the same.

There was the excitement that came with the arrival of the paintings, unloaded in crates from freight-line trucks or from the tailgate of battered station wagons; the initial viewing and the speculation as to which were going to sell and which to remain dogs; the sweeping and dusting to make the place presentable, and then finally the despair and last-minute hysteria, the frenzied call for all-hands-on-deck as the zero hour approached.

Most openings were held on Sunday afternoons, and the favored weather was a day in which an early-morning golf-killing drizzle had turned to balmy skies by noon, so that by four o'clock the first of the cars would begin to line the curb all up and down Hood Street. By 1956 we had been in the location for eleven years, and already the neighborhood had begun to change from one-family residential to apartment complexes and office buildings; we were getting more and more requests for re-zoning, and nobody cared what you did; and the addition of an art gallery enhanced rather than disgraced the neighborhood.

I was major domo and chief floor-walker, and wisely kept out of the realm of sales, although I tried to impart to Orianne some of my newly acquired lore of salesmanship. By three o'clock the bar-tender would have arrived, perhaps Bobo Indril recruited from the Woman's Club, in white coat and wide smile, and pretty soon in would troop the art crowd of Dallas, people whom we had known at the Museum or elsewhere, friends, relatives, the bored and lonely, the bright and chipper, the knowers and the seekers, along with the illuminati and the imbibii, the free-loaders and the well-wishers, the lookers and the buyers. Nearly all of them would be clad in shining Sunday raiment and with eager, bright, cocktail-party smiles. As the shadows deepened amongst the big oaks of Lee Park, the conversation-decibels rose by the hour and here and there a red star, marking a sale, would appear on the burlap beneath a picture; Rual Askeew or in later years, Eugene Lewis from the *News*, might be there or Joan Minnick from the *Herald* to review the show and to furnish a write-up and free advertising in next Tuesday's edition.

At first, Orianne took the artists that lay to hand, such talented Grover students as Betty Blyn, Dorothy Bolis and Forrest Mudd, along with Ethel Broadbill and Fred Kitchen. Of course, there was never any trouble about recruiting other artists; they flocked to the door, with portfolios under their arms, or with paintings stuffed into the turtle-backs of arthritic sedans. Mexico *aficionados* but recently



returned from the land of romance and dysentery dropped by, breathless with the news that "there is this *perfectly* wonderful man, so gentle and sensitive, really a fine artist, but a great *person* beside, you'd just *love* him; anyway, he has this little framing shop in Oaxaca, but paints on the side and sells *everything* he does." This last phrase always had a sinister ring, denoting as it did someone who turned out little Parisian street scenes, bullfight pictures, or pretty-senorita portraits, all priced to sell at thirty-eight fifty, including frame.

I was enchanted, as various artists came from Taos and from Paris, some of them established men such as Etienne Ret and Louis Ribac, some of them such wanderers on the face of the earth as Alfred Rogaway, and another, a sculptor-taxi-driver from Mexico City who once brought in, among other things, a little cast-stone number of a couple in the act of love.

"My God," I said to Orianne, helping the artist and his girl friend, the wife of a prominent brain surgeon in Baltimore, lug the things into the house from the car. "My God," I said, "did you see what that is, on the mantel, and if you did see it, will you show it, and if so, what will you call it — 'Rainy Sunday Afternoon in Tampico'?"

"I did see it," she replied, "and we won't show it, but if we finally decide to, why don't we give it a snazzy Italian title, maybe something like 'Forniculi, Fornicula,' and let it go at that?"

By 1956 Rick was eight, and old enough to leave alone or to baby-sit with the gallery. From then on he grew up with the paintings glowing on our walls, hearing the art talk, and along with it the tears and frustrations, the lost sales and the shows that didn't go.

As the years went by, Orianne gathered to her such professional, producing artists as Chapman Kelley and Wilfred Higgins, along with Steve Rascoe, Merrill Cason, Cecil Casebier of San Antonio and Jean Wasson from Corpus Christi. All of these, with the exception of Higgins and Kelley, stayed with her, and by and large their work was pretty traditional, for all that the mid-Fifties and early Sixties were the heyday of the Abstract Expressionists.

With these activities, it would seem that all my ambitions, worthy and otherwise, were being fulfilled; that I was beginning to Be Somebody, or at least to associate with the Somebodies — for all that I was known, really, to the Power Structure of Dallas in about the same way as a nimble, gifted and rather amusing cabin-boy might have been known to J. P. Morgan on the Corsair. At any rate, sometime in 1957, there was also the matter of the lost manila envelope. My attention was called to this missing article by a somewhat puzzling letter from Aka Burnside, my agent in New York:

"What's the matter," he asked, "don't you want your money? Where's that contract we sent you for your book?"

Contract? Book? *What* book? Oh yes. *The Bypaths of Chaos*. "Oh, God! Sugar, you seen any contracts, any dirty nasty, ole beat-up contracts lying around here. nothing important, just the one thing in my life I always wanted — to publish a novel, and here this letter —." At this, Orianne scrounged around, and sure enough, there in a pile of old magazines and junk mail from a month before — there it lay.

It was a long brown envelope, with a letter telling me of the acceptance of my novel and containing a sixteen-page blue-backed contract, replete with some of the most beautiful prose this side of heaven:

"THIS AGREEMENT, made this 19th day of June, 1957, by and between Loki Tay, hereinafter termed the 'Proprietor' and THE NEW AMERICAN LIBRARY OF WORLD LITERATURE, INC., — hereinafter termed the 'Publisher,'  
*WITNESSETH:*"

My eyes ran down the long, legal-sized pages, neatly blocked off by double-red lines to mark the margins, past paragraphs dealing with such heart-stopping matters as Proprietor's Declaration and Guarantee (I noted that it had been cagily arranged that the "Proprietor" was holding the "Publisher" harmless against all suits for anything of a "libelous or illegal character"); such matters also, as translations and foreign editions, and then, at the very heart of the matter, royalties. I would get a penny for every copy sold (at twenty five cents) up to 150,000 and a penny and a half thereafter, together with a fifty-fifty split of all monies received from such thrilling possibilities as Serialization, Condensation, Digest, Book Club or Quotation. Finally, (here the vistas widened, the horizons stretched to infinity, and there was a sound of silver trumpets), ninety percent of everything received from "Performance (television, radio, movie, dramatic, etc.)."

A \$250.00 advance was tendered, together with the balance of \$1,250.00 payable upon return of the signed contract. Would I be so kind, said Agent Burnside in his letter of June 21 as to sign the contract and return it, so that the matter could be concluded?

I flipped the pages over and then, with a glazed look of total happiness, hugged and kissed Orianne and then ran yelping across the street to tell Jac and Bev the good news. ("Tay, you get carried away.") Following that, of course, I signed the contract and sent it back, with a letter of apology for the delay. Pretty soon, within a week, here came the balance of the entire fifteen hundred dollars, less ten percent for the agent. After that I settled down to wait for

publication. Surely it would not be long — and I waited — and waited — and waited. Yes, as time ground on, I paid dearly for my gab, and was taunted at cocktail parties and at work with gentle but not always kindly inquiries, — “Well Loki, when’s the book coming out?”

I bore all this without too much travail of spirit, and in any event, by now, as 1957 melded into 1958, there were other things on my mind and bigger game afoot. Although I had now been out of psychiatry for nearly three years, I still continued to be haunted by old ghosts; my will-to-power was not to be stilled, nor even, it appeared, controlled. In the past, as we have seen, I had been tortured by mad, destructive impulses toward those who had served me some ill turn or other, however trifling; but now, my fury was directed at those who by their lights at least had done me nothing but good, who had given me my bride and a handsome dowry, who had given me my start in folk singing, had offered me a job when my government work had ended, and had even taken me back when I was stumbling about the streets with no place to go.

Yes, now it was the Martines, all three of them, father, mother and son, who were singled out for destruction, and time and again in sick fantasy I stood at their bedroom doors with an automatic shotgun and filled them full of buckshot; yes, time and again, I saw Albert Junior, who had done me no disservice and whose quiet humor and loyalty I had even come to appreciate, die beneath the wheels of a truck on the highways; time and again in fantasy, I stayed late at the store, and when everyone had left, went into the Piano Department, lifted the lids of the grand pianos, emptied ten-gallon cans of lacquer thinner into the gleaming strings and over the beautiful yellow hardwood soundboards and then set the entire store on fire, in a mad Witches’ Sabbath, a castle-burning out of a Gothic novel.

That there were people lashed to their beds down at Terrell who were not much worse off than I, did not escape me, but I did not seek any additional therapy, I who by now had another elegant little private office, the title of Vice President, and a company car of my own, a new, sleek, little Kharmann Ghia in ebony enamel.

By this time, my function at the store had become pretty much decorative rather than functional, for all that I occasionally bore a hand at noon-time in the Record Department, went out on collection forays for Katie Browninge, interviewed people for jobs and, after some sales-training courses at S.M.U., conducted weekly sales clinics in the auditorium.

With all this and with the feeling that I was leading the life of a vulture, circling around in the sky, waiting for somebody below me

there to expire, I continued to burn with the ulcer symptoms which I had acquired on a skiing trip at Cloudcroft, New Mexico in February 1957. I still had this ailment in all its glory a year later in February 1958, as I sat one morning in Mr. M.'s office. Waiting For Godot, so to speak, with a stack of books beside me, and a small, elegant blue folder in my hands. Finally Mr. M. arrived and I greeted him as non-committally as I could, for all that I felt that here at last was the show-down, the moment of truth. I had harbored in the vineyards lo these many years, and now — and now — Mr. M. came in and greeted me casually enough and waved me to sit back down in my chair.

"Well Squire," I said, "I just wanted to show you this. They sent it to me yesterday."

"Well, now, let's see here," and he reared back in his chair and cast his eyes over the Retailing Certificate which I had just received, the diploma for my four and half years' work, my thirty-six hours of credit in S.M.U.'s School of Business Administration. "And," I went on while he was reading the brief inscription, "here are all the texts," and I pointed to them, where I had made a four-foot stack on the floor, with the titles turned to him, texts on accounting, marketing, sales analysis, and the like. "See here —" and I said no more, sitting there thinking of my father ("I always took what they offered me"), and of how I now wanted twelve thousand dollars a year — that was the sum I had set — or else — or else — what? I could not bring myself to name the figure or anything else, and so sat in silence.

I need not detail the rest of the interview nor the half-hour lecture which I received on the benefits of education and how proud — and so on — and so on; at the end of it, I gathered up my diploma, and carrying the books in my arms like cordwood, bore them back to the shelves in my office.

As I have indicated, all that was in February 1958, and now, about six months later, at quarter to nine, on Tuesday, September 2, 1958, I stood in the auditorium before the first sales training class of the fall semester. For weeks I had been preparing the opening speech, rehearsing it on tape recorder, shaping it, fining it down, stropping and honing it to a cutting edge. I had carefully planted Mr. M. on the front row for this occasion, and then I delivered my speech. Of it I need mention only the tone, which was highly charged, and delivered in a strained voice and with an air of mingled ferocity and hysteria. When it was over, I went down to my office, grabbed my hat and strode up to the recently opened Statler-Hilton where I loved to go "to soak up a little of that upper-middle-class-luxury," as I used to phrase it to myself. After a thick-steak

lunch I sat in a club chair in the lobby, smoking a Roi Tan Perfecto, watching the suavely dressed convention executives move about like pleasantly agitated schools of gray fish.

Then early in the afternoon, I strolled back to the store, to find a call from Mr. M. on my desk.

"Loki, after your speech this morning, where did you go?"

This was an unexpected tack, and I sat and stared at the carpet for a long long time. "Just where did you go? Tell me, did you go to your psychiatrist?" and I knew I was away out on a limb, and there was the sound of a power saw being warmed up somewhere in the immediate vicinity of the trunk.

"I don't remember," I stammered, "I just don't remember."

"Well," said Mr. M., "Loki, we just can't get along together any more, I guess."

"You mean you want to fire me?"

There was a long pause. "Tell me how to say it," he said, and for the first time he seemed to be begging, as though somebody was being asked not only to sharpen the ax and to dig his own grave but to swing the blade over his own neck.

"You can stay around a while longer, if you want to," he said, finally.

"Do you want me to conduct the seminar tomorrow morning?"

"Not with *that* speech"; and I knew I had had it, that That Was All She Wrote.

I wandered upstairs then to one of the vacant studios and phoned Katie Browninge to meet me there. When she came up I fell on her neck and cried for a solid hour, telling her the whole story, and then went walking around town with the old lost feeling upon me.

Late in the afternoon I found myself at the Martine home on Swarthmore Avenue, where, walking around to the rear, I found Albert Junior and Mr. M. cleaning out their hunting-trailer. I went up to them, and started weeping again, and they led me inside, and for an hour or two I poured out my heart once more, and finally I quieted down, we were all sitting around the breakfast room table with cups of coffee; and pretty soon I walked out of the house and got in the car, not yet being nutty enough to surrender control of my beloved Kharmann Ghia, and drove slowly home. There, for the third, and final time, that day, I Told It Like It Was — to Orianne.

# # #

Old Man Coots kept a pet monkey. Right there in his drugstore. This emporium was a block or so from Martine's on the edge of Lower Elm, a dubious enough address, before the new Federal Courthouse, Number One Main Place and the forty-two story First National paved the streets of the neighborhood with gold. When Rick was very young and happened to be downtown, I used to lead him into Coots' place to play with the monkey. It was kept on a chain in the back room and would hop around and rattle its collar at you, scoot up on the shelves and back again, beg for popcorn, peanuts or anything else you happened to have on you.

Now however, once more I played with the monkey, but this time it was Tuesday afternoon on January 20th, 1959; the TV cameras were on me, and Lon Tinkle and columnist Frank Tolbert, together with a hundred or more other friends and well wishers, with doubtless an enemy or two, were thronging through the store. For at last my book had come out, and this was my autographing party. The average autographing party is a posh affair, usually held in a regular, Establishment, hard-back book store. In the Dallas of those days, such a soiree would probably have attracted such folk as John McGinnis, Evelyn Oppenheimer, John William Rogers, Liz McMurray, Bliss Albright from Cokesbury's, and other notables of the literary set. I had discussed the book with my friend Bill Gilliland who had taken over McMurray's Personal Book Shop, telling him casually, "I guess you know it's coming out as a Signet paperback, and you won't be handling it, so maybe I'll have to hold the autographing party in some drugstore."

Bill laughed, he had a ready laugh anyway, and, amateur market-researcher that I was, I tried the gentle jest out on several other people. I got a good response, following which I hired my friend Bernard Brister, a p.r. man, at the relatively fat fee of four hundred dollars to handle the publicity, and here, at Coots Cut Rate Drug, we all were. I had interested *Life Magazine* in the project, and its reporters and cameramen were all over the place, along with Bel Tevi, TV cameraman for NBC News. Flashbulbs popped, the TV camera ground, the floodlights glared: a man with a sandwich board, displaying a blowup of the book's cover, walked to and fro

on the sidewalk outside. Hundreds of the books were displayed everywhere about the store, and the book cover itself, done in beige, black and electric blue, revealed a young man with his coat slung over his shoulder and a determined look about his eyes, resembling in no whit the sensitive, gifted, neurotic barrister who was the anti-hero of the book. In the foreground, our young man was lying on the grass, bending over a young lady who did not seem to be uninterested in the proposition which he appeared to be whispering in her ear.

"The explosive story of a struggling young lawyer and the girl who got in his way," read the blurb, and well, I supposed, that was a fair shot at reporting one level of the book. It didn't happen to be the level in which I was interested, but I was in no mood nor position to argue with publishers. During the negotiations preceding publication, I had been forced to hack off 25,000 words, most of which had come off the very end, so that later on friends, in commenting about the work were likely to say, "Well, Loki, of course I liked it, but it does end sort of abruptly, doesn't it?"

At any rate, here I was at the party, seated on a chair up on the counter and the monkey was up there with me, perched on my shoulder, while I wondered whether he was going to nip a chunk out of my neck, and perhaps some of the audience wondered which was the author. The store was jam-packed from aisle to aisle, and I sat there in what I took to be my finest hour, writing, writing, writing, in the books that were being handed up to me for autographs.

"All those words, Loki, all those words," George Botts, a friend and fellow attorney, whispered to me, turning over the pages in his hand, and I grinned down at him, my gor-blimey cap, a baggy tweed number like those favored by 1917 Kerensky revolutionaires pushed back from my forehead.

Miriam Galerstein who had composed a folk song in honor of the occasion wandered amongst the throng with her guitar, but was crowded off the program by my own playing and singing, and by a rendition of "Der Schnitzelbank" by a chorus of the Schleipak girls who came over from the Blue Front Delicatessen. Realtor Erle Rawlins contributed a big green wreath which was draped over a yard-high metal sign of the vintage of 1912, in which a sweet-faced old fashioned girl urged the passers by to Drink Coca Cola. Mother was there, as well as Rick and his friend Johnny Tooke and of course Orianne, who stared up at me with a distressed, resentful look, (who is this fool with whom I happen to be unfortunately associated?)

Later on, we adjourned to our house for food and stronger drink. (Since Coots had a retail liquor-store license we could serve nothing more potent than unspiked punch.) Throughout, I was in a state of

euphoria, of matchless bliss. This was the birthday of my life; I had triumphed over the Martines and so far as that goes, All Those Others; yes, I Had Shown Them; I had achieved a life's ambition, for all that it had taken a quarter of a century to accomplish.

Later in the evening, a couple of stalwarts and myself carried Libba Margolies, one of the guests who had become knee-walkin' drunk, to her apartment over on North Carroll, threw her on the couch, and left (there was no bulldog, and no father to whisper, "Shut up, Barney — be quiet" — and so far as that goes, no white panties to slip down over white thighs and no bra to unloosen over little-boy breasts).

The next day, Bel Tevi and I went to his place and put together a story. "You've got to have a story," he said, "you've got to have a story, it's just like a piece of fiction, and then I'll be able to get you some nation-wide publicity on NBC." The story-line was that all my life I had dreamed of being a Rich-and-Famous-Author; yes, I had dreamed of an autographing party in New York; Alfred Knopf would be there surely, and Bennet Cerf, maybe even such pushing young comers as Jean Stafford or Sloan Wilson — but here, instead, I was being published merely in paperback, being denied my due share of fame — the prospect of book reviews and the other trappings of hard-back book promotion. So what the hell, I resolved with tightened belt and lip to make the best of it; and here I was surrounded by friends, and happy about the whole thing, anyway. All day long Bel and I worked on the story, at which he showed an astounding capacity for good writing, and at the end we had a text to accompany his carefully edited pictures, the whole thing put into a neat little documentary which would run for about five minutes.

The night before, after taking Libba to her apartment I had come on home and parked the car in the garage. Everybody else in the house was asleep and the place was quiet. I wandered through the rooms dizzy with joy and then finally turned off all the lights and went to bed, snuggling up to Orianne's warm and luscious butt and drifting off into clouds of happy sleep. NBC: *Life Magazine*: Today Chermany, Tomorrow Der Vorld. This time I couldn't miss, couldn't lose for winnin'. Could I?

— — —

It was quiet here. Very quiet, cultured and respectable as all hell. The room was large, about the size of a sittingroom suite in a luxury motel, but lacking the king-sized bed and the deep-pile carpet. The floor was of polished brown vinyl; there were some chairs and a table, and the wastebasket was emptied every day. Tradebooks, still



in their dust jackets, lined the walls up to the ceiling. Here in the Dan Ferguson Room, you could hear an idea drop, in the unlikely event any such thing happened along; yes here, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse — if you want to make an exception of me.

This was mid-February 1959, about a month after my party at Coots', and I was in the Bridwell Library of the Perkins School of Theology at S.M.U. My friend Decherd Turner, the bitter erudite librarian, had offered me this space as a writing room and I had snapped up his offer. I was in the state of exultation and the air was electric with promise.

Long before my break-up with Martine's in September the year before, I had begun and later in the Fall had finished a novel about my con-man friend Dirk Brabant. This, true to my contract with Signet, which demanded that I submit my next two brain-children to it, I had dutifully tendered for publication, and was hopefully awaiting the result. Getting novels published, I felt, was like getting a kiss, or an olive from a bottle, after the first one, the rest are supposed to come easy; and already I felt like an established "Arthur," as a writer is sometimes called in Texas.

"This is Loki Tay, the novelist," violist Lara Epinet murmured, introducing me to a covey of well-groomed quail in somebody's livingroom one fall afternoon, and I minded me of those coke-drinkers in that green Hudson sedan in Amarillo long ago, and treated myself to a fatuous enigmatic smile.

Then, after finishing the Brabant novel, the remainder of 1958 had been spent in the enterprise of play-writing. My friends Til Briese and Crikey Flavin were both in the Speech Department at S.M.U. and both had sired many dramatic works of one sort and another. Both were merry souls with a good ear for a jest, and it would, I thought, be no trouble at all to brain-storm a play.

It had been a stimulating experience, with the three of us huddled in the back room of Til's house, with wife Winnie bustling in from time to time "with coffee for you literary geniuses." All the three of us then, twice a week sat around a tape recorder and I typed it all out and edited it during the days in between.

After six or eight weeks of effort, it had come out, a vehicle tailored for the talents of Greer Garson. Director Ramsey Burch had already promised to give it a whirl out at Theatre '59 if I could lure her out there. "Miss Garson can come to this theatre any time and just recite the ABC's if she only will."

Our plot was taken from what an unsympathetic outlander might have dubbed "a typical Dallas incident." Sometime during the Fifties, Dallas had treated itself to a gleaming downtown library at the

corner of Harwood and Commerce. Part of its décor was an enormous metal wall-hanging in the lobby, executed by sculptor Harry Bertoia. On a public tour of the new structure, Dallas' "dydamic" Mayor Bob Thornton had viewed the art work in question, only to wise-crack that to him it "looked like a bad piece of welding." The news media had gleefully scooped this up of course, and our town had gone through another one of its glorious art fights, with much penning of letters-to-the-editor, opinions by would-be art experts and much strident talk and indignant switching about of well-tailored butts at cocktail parties. (The conservative element was considerably embarrassed by the fact that Bertoia was found not only to be free of left-wing or liberal taint but was even suspected of being a Republican.)

Our plot revolved about that incident then, and originally, all three of us authors had envisioned ourselves as creators of a knock-about comedy along the lines of *Hay Fever* or of *You Can't Take It With You*, but at the first read-through of the complete rough-draft, we looked at each other in dismay.

"God damn," I said, "I guess you realize, we're just a bunch of serious-minded bastards"; and Til and Crikey nodded their heads in doleful agreement.

Well, whatever it was, we kept at it, and came up with a final draft. This, we lovingly and hopefully bundled off to Miss Garson, and, with our ears attuned for the happy rustle of royalty greenbacks, sat back with smug little sighs, dreaming of the days to come.

My dreams, of course, had a more desperate, feverish quality than theirs, for along with my concern about *A Kiss for the Mayor*, went my mounting anxiety about the fate of *The By-Paths of Chaos*.

The reactions to the novel, both public and private, had been mixed, but not on the whole unfavorable. Although the book had come out in humble paperback, still, both papers, the *News* and the *Times Herald* had been kind enough to give space to reviews, and two of my professorial friends, Burin Docklee in Denton, and Henry Nash Smith out at Berkeley had rolled a log for me.

Speaking of the novel's anti-hero, Docklee opined: "As protagonist and narrator, Paul is neither simple nor shallow. He reads Gibbon in his law office, quotes poetry, speaks epigrams, sees through his cheap and vulgar associates. He even sees through his own cheap and vulgar life. Among the other characters, few see so well."

Henry's review was along the same lines:

"Although Mr. Tay felt the need to provide the semblance of a plot by having the heroine shoot her art teacher, the mode of the book is essentially lyric. It is not a narrative,

really, but a series of wildly inventive conversations between Cotton and Gail . . . Tay is an observer as well as a poet; the setting of the story has a solidity which is lacking in the characters and the plot. Perhaps his eye for detail, his delight in the presented social surface, points the way he should take as a novelist. The first book proves Mr. Tay can do almost anything he sets his mind to in the way of prose; his problem is only to resign himself to the fact that no one can do everything at once."

Other comments were for the most part flattering, delivered as they were to my face, but I seemed to enjoy best the ones that were equivocal or else out-and-out-hostile.

"Never thought a quiet man could write a book like that," said Jake Fowler, of the Texaco service station at Rawlins and Oak Lawn. "Just had to get it all out of your system, I guess," growled psychiatrist Bob Stube, after flipping through a few pages while his wife Lib strolled through a show at the gallery. "I read your book, *Loki*," trilled the beautiful acidulous Jeanette Riffle, "and I must say, it's the worst book I've ever read." At this she laughed, and her family and ours kept on being good friends.

In the same vein, Barbara Danfors, a long-time loved one of our family, wrote, "I can't honestly say it's a book I like, but I did find it fascinating. It all sounds so much like you"; and folklorist-writer-professor Bill Owens reported from Columbia University, "I can report that your novel is for sale in our local candy store."

Well, all this, the attention if not the adulation, was enough to stoke the ego for months to come, but where, oh where, was *Life Magazine*, and where, oh where, were Bel Tevi and NBC?

*Life*, of course, with its millions of middle-brow readers, held the fairest hope; but from that quarter all was silence. Neither Bernard nor I dared to make inquiries, to pluck impatiently at the elbow of Fate; but finally, sometime in late February, the truth came out. True to promise, our article, skillfully polished, and fortified with dozens of glossy prints, had been sent to New York and duly scheduled for appearance. One of the features of the magazine at that time was entitled "Life Goes To a Party," and our story had been planned for this column sometime in March. As the very Devil would have it though, the week before my story was due to appear, *Life Went To a Party*, all right — but one in Ft. Worth instead of in Dallas, and of course, that took care of *Life's* party-ing in Texas for a long time to come.

This was a hammer-blow, its impact not very much softened by the good news from NBC. At first, for all of Bel's pleading, the honchos in New York decided it was not newsworthy; but finally,

on February 6th, Bel managed to shoe-horn it into the Dave Garro-way Show. It ran for its full five minutes, which was a generous length for such a trifle, and Dave did not seem to be too unhappy about it. At any rate, the book sales were probably helped by the publicity, and Victor Weybright of the New American Library, publisher of Signet books, had written a thankful if somewhat guarded note of appreciation:

"I was grateful for your early morning call, so that we could view your extraordinary promotional performance on Dave Garroway's Today show. It was terrific — except that the hard-cover publishers that didn't publish the book seemed to get a bigger mention than the "lowly paperback" publisher of THE BY PATHS OF CHAOS. We don't feel lowly, at all."

Well, the Dave Garroway show then, and due notice, of whatever kind, from the Chairman and Editor himself. None of that disguised the fact, however, that two weeks before, I had received a kindly but fatal blow from Greer Garson:

Referring to *A Kiss For the Mayor*, she wrote: "I don't think there is much chance that I could do it because in my present frame of mind, owing to my recent bereavement, I have cancelled indefinitely all commitments as I am just not in a state of grace for the performing arts."

Well, so much for the play; and for Bel Tevi and NBC, and for *Life Magazine*. The final straw that gave the camel a slipped disc however, was the refusal of my "lowly paperback" publisher to consider the novel about Dirk Brabant, and now I had no heart for anything else; and anyhow, over the past weeks, even when buoyed up by false hope, I had done nothing but sit hour after hour in the library, staring at the wall most of the time, and occasionally starting four or five pages of a novel one day, and then, Penelope-like, tearing them all up the next. So, sometime during the first weeks of March, I walked to the window in Bridwell Library and took a final look at the tan winter lawns and Georgian splendors of the S.M.U. campus, threw my white manuscript paper into the cardboard box, and locked the portable typewriter back into its carrying case. It was time to go downstairs, to say goodbye to Decherd Turner, to thank him for all favors received, and to wag my sad ass on back to the little frame cottage in Oak Lawn.

# # #

"Laid around and stayed around  
in this old town too long.

Summer's almost gone, winter's comin' on;  
Laid around and stayed around  
in this old town too long,

An' I feel like I got to travel on."

The battered white enamel AM radio which had seen us through the war was still sounding good, and here in Rick's old room I lay and listened to it. Rick had long since moved into the space formerly occupied by our roomer, almost to the day of our paying off the ten-year note in 1955 (another four or five days at home with a spell); and now we had a guest room, for all that it was a six-by-eight with a double-bunk bed and a folding door which could never quite be closed. The beds were spread in a light green Scottish plaid of some forgotten clan, and the noisy thumping little air-conditioner was still stored away for the winter, its window-space being filled by a piece of brown Masonite.

There on the bottom bunk, with the hall door and the windows shut, I lay for the better part of a week in March 1959; I lay there trying to decide whether to live or to die, and didn't seem especially interested in the outcome. I looked back on my past life, regarding it now as a journey through strange forbidding terrain, the jungles and the deserts, the dark bitter streams jumping with ego-eating fish, the burning sands of self-induced privation. I saw nothing but more of the same in the future; and yet the phial of sleeping pills, if I still had one, tempted me not; mostly, I just seemed to want to lie there and listen to those powerful ignorant country voices and the steel guitars; what a pity they weren't playing "Born to Lose."

About this time, my brooding reverie was relieved one morning by my folklorist-professor friends Burin Docklee and Jock Bree. Both of these were ribald erudite jesting souls devoted to my welfare, and on my invitation they had stopped off for breakfast, on their way from Denton to the meeting of the Texas Folklore Society in Austin. They coaxed me to go with them, and I could easily have gone, staying at the Longhorn Courts on Guadalupe Street for less than five dollars a night, but withal, I felt too low-down to go, and

sat through a hilarious breakfast looking as I had at the Martines' Christmas Eve dinner in 1952, wanting to die, and wishing them away and no longer a witness to my humiliation. Ironically enough, like many other people at that time, they considered me well-launched on a wildly profitable writing career, and waiting only for the next royalty check from New York. Finally they were gone, and I was free to go back to my beloved misery.

Yes, to continue (same song, second verse), here I was at fifty-one, without a job, without prospects, the buzzards wheeling above my hopes — I who had been, at one time or another in the Brownian motion of my career, lawyer, merchant, novelist, playwright, bricklayer's helper, postman, folk singer, recording artist, father, son, husband, art dealer, neurot, psycho, soldier, sailor, fiddler, failure, — the only thing that seemed intact was my law license. I had kept it up (at Martine's expense) over the years, and there, in that quarter, the specter of seven years of frustration haunted me like a passion. Still, going back to the private practice of the law was the only thing left to do; but no, I couldn't, just couldn't, couldn't, couldn't do it — but anyway, a few days later, that is what I did.

Next to my breaking away from Karen Bofors, it was the most bitter and difficult decision of my life; but regardless, at the end of the week, I got off my dead ass and made four calls. The first was on Williams the printer, at his plant on Ross Avenue near Lamar. "I want some announcements printed," I said. My next call was on Dion Rexroth at his bookstore, where I asked him, "You got any old law books kicking around out here in your barn, just any ones that will make a guestroom look like a law office?" To John Mara, dealer in current lawbooks I said, "You got a new *Moffett's Form Book* you'd like to sell?" With all that, and a notary seal which I had purchased several months before so as to take an acknowledgement to a deed, I was in business.

Of course, there also was the matter of a shingle, and my fourth call had been on Sharp's Hardware, at which I purchased a metal yard sign. This I suspended beneath the Tay Gallery insignia at our front gate, and very brave it looked, too, LOKI TAY, ATTORNEY AT LAW.

Now, the double bed had been taken out, and a couch, also covered in that ubiquitous green plaid, had taken its place; and into one of the old bookcases on which I had been working on VE day, went Dion's calf-bound law books. So it was, for the remainder of that Spring, all through the Summer, and into the Fall, I sat in the office, or stirred myself around town as the occasion required.

There was always, somehow, something to do, although not necessarily something connected with the practice of the law. The house

dripped with paintings, and sculpture stood about on the shelves, on the mantelpiece and on the buffet; the phone rang with inquiries about the latest showings, and prospects or suspects, as the salesmen would say, wandered in and out all day. Rick was much in evidence also, playing with what friends he could bring down to the house; he was ten years of age then, serious in the face but with a sense of humor and fond of play, and by then, a student at Stephen J. Hay Elementary School more than a mile away. I would watch him out of sight as he rode up the gravelled alleyway on his bicycle, with his trombone case lashed tipsily on his handlebars and his paper sack lunch in the basket underneath.

I had sent out announcements to every one on Orianne's gallery-list; Lord, I thought, I know half the people in this town, for all that hardly any of them knew me as an attorney at law.

"I got your announcement," trilled Chiquita Willard, wife of realtor-rich Hank J. Willard, who seemed to think it hilarious, "attorney at law — when did *you* get to be an attorney at law!" And indeed, to those unwise in the ways of the late-bloomer, there was something weird, perhaps a little obscene, about somebody after the age of fifty-one daring to blossom-out as a lawyer.

I knew such folk then, along with the board members of Civic Music, of the symphony and of the Museum League, and even enjoyed a nodding acquaintance with all of the Neiman-Marci. Years before, so as to bring Rick up in the ways of the Lord and of William Ellery Channing, we had re-joined the Unitarian Church, and now six or eight years later, Mary Helal the secretary let me use the church's mailing list and its addressograph for my purposes. Beside all that, I was weeks in going through the phone book, combing it for names, and sending out hopeful announcements accordingly.

So the Spring went by and then the Summer, in the middle of which, sometime in July, I looked about me, took a deep breath, and rented office space in the Bookman-Jones Building just a block or so away.

I had met Rob Bookman at the Unitarian Church, and at his invitation had begun to hang around his law office, envying his library, his carpeted reception room and callipygian secretaries. Now, he introduced me to Naomi Lehr, who with husband Jake lived in high cotton at 3525 Turtle Creek half a block away and who had a hobby of decorating, and kept her swags and swatches in Room 265. She was seldom there, in the little shotgun office with a single entrance and a stingy little steel-framed window set high into the rear wall. By now, my practice was zipping along at fifty to seventy-five dollars a month, and I felt ready for the Big Time. For thirty-eight dollars a month, I rented the outer one-third of Naomi's office,

for all that she had to walk through mine to get to hers, and for which she and I called each other "Roommate" when we met at various art functions for years to come.

Somewhere I procured a ten-foot stand-up folding screen in natural bamboo, together with an automatic answering device known as the Ansafone. Orianne's three-quarter length stunning and only faintly forbidding portrait by Chapman Kelley glowed on the wall behind me, and my friend Jen Danfors at Took's Modern Homes sold me, for a couple of hundred bucks, some spare functional office furniture, and now, with my *Moffett's Texas Form Book* on the side-table and Bookman's library down the hall, for the first time I felt that I was ready to undertake the serious practice of the law.

Whether the law was ready for me, was quite another thing. I had by now pretty much quit living in the afterglow of the novel. My expected six months' royalty check had just simply not arrived, and in its stead I had to console myself with banquets, one of them paid for, one of them free.

The free one was in March, at which time I was invited to attend the annual awards banquet of the Texas Institute of Letters. This was held in the red-plush and crystal-chandelier splendor of the Adolphus Hotel. Here, I sat at the table with Alfred Knopf.

The famous publisher was sporting one of his famous outfits, a wine-colored shirt and a plum-colored necktie. He was a stocky, florid-faced man of middle age, with the lively eye and alert manner of a fencing master, and to me, his conversation was as fascinating as his attire.

"What makes a best seller? Great God, I wish I knew. Take *The Prophet*, for instance, by Kahlil Gibran. One of our readers came up to me, when was it, in 1921 — said, 'I've got this manuscript from some obscure Lebanese poet; it's nebulous mystical stuff, but still I think, I really think —.' 'All right, all right,' I said, 'we need another prestige item for the fall list; but keep the edition down to a thousand copies and maybe we can get our money back.' Well, the rest is history; it started selling, slow but sure, and has never stopped to this day. One time we thought we'd give it a boost, and threw some money away on advertising. Right away, sales dropped; we cut out the advertising, and sales climbed right back up. I've never read the book; and never met anyone who has. So — what makes a best seller? God may know, but I don't."

He spread out his expressive hairy hands, and went back to his dessert and coffee.

This, and the meal, were all that I had from the Institute. I was disappointed not to be tendered a membership in this Académie française of the prairies, and still more, to get neither a win, place or



show for my novel, which I had put into the race as a dark-horse entry.

A couple of months after that, I had been named a Headliner of the Year, and had forked out a hundred dollars to attend, together with Orianne, the annual banquet of the Gridiron Club. Here, I had hoped to find myself lampooned along with other notables, but even this dubious honor was withheld, and we comforted ourselves with the strip-sirloins and the smooth whisky at the open bar.

My novel was widely read at the courthouse, where I was considered a Rich-and-Famous-Arthur, rolling in royalties from both books and records. In addition, such is the osmosis of fame, from my association with the Tay Galleries, I was even considered a painter; and years later a poet when, for some reason I became confused in the public mind with fellow barrister and gifted song-writer Marcy Jimson. All this, then and later, swelled the ego if not the pocketbook, and at one time in mid-1959, it even brought me a fee of a bottle of Scotch.

Knight Mathews, a senior partner in one of the more august legal firms, hearing of my fame, commissioned me to compose a fun-poem for his daughter's wedding. This I did, grinding out some doggerel which I hoped would be mercifully disposed of along with other remnants of the trousseau. In a spirit of *noblesse oblige*, I told Knight that of course I would charge no fee, but would accept only a fifth of Chivas Regal.

This he delivered to me at the office, after I had mailed the poem to him.

"I'd sure hate to be starting out all over again," he said, with a glance around my elegant if somewhat cramped quarters.

"Oh, it's all right," I said breezily, but six months later, by Christmastime, it seemed all too evident that this was just not going to be the case.

"I'll by God sit down there, and if business comes, I'll handle it the best I know how; and if it doesn't, I'll just by God sit there," I had stoutly declared on venturing to rent my own office and put in my own phone. Now however, it was late December, and for months I had just sat there, although I had managed to glean a client here and there, getting a few waiver divorces for seventy-five dollars each, and writing a few wills for one-third of that. Yes, I sat there and sat there, amidst th'encircling gloom, and in the end, it was our maid Dewranda and through her, bail bondsman Pepe Medrano who finally came to my rescue.

Since its conception and birth, the Tay Gallery had brought Orianne two of the things dearest to a housewife's heart: a maid, and a car of her own. Dewranda the maid had served us long and well,

and along in September 1959, her son had become entangled with the law. She had asked me to spring the prodigal one from jail. This called for the making of a bond, and from the Yellow Pages I got the name of a bondsman, one Pepe Medrano. Pepe had made the bond, and now, on Christmas Eve, Pepe in turn called me.

For me, it had been a rugged day. Within the family circle, for reasons which I shall go into later, there was Trouble at the Pass; and all day long and for most of the previous week, we had been finding food and shelter for winsome folk singer Bertha Martial who was temporarily down on her luck and stranded in town with a brood of small children. After caring for them as best we could, feeding them and then driving them all out to see the big Christmas tree on Stemmons Expressway, we took her back to her dubious lodgings on Cole Avenue, and on arriving back home I had received the call from Pepe.

As a mere bondsman, Pepe needed a writ lawyer, and when one needs a writ lawyer, he needs one right away; so, leaving Rick and Orianne at home, I jumped in the car and scurried down to Pepe's office.

I had walked by Pepe's place of business many times, it being only half a block from the courthouse, down on Main and Record, in a region which a century or so before had been a place of whore-houses, and of saloons where dog-fights were held in the back rooms; a place, where, before the T. and P. went west to Ft. Worth, the freighters from Jacksboro used to cause traffic jams with their ox-powered wagons loaded with buffalo hides. Well, the place hadn't picked up a hell of a lot since then, being given over now to beer joints and cot houses, to liquor stores and to the offices of lawyers who were said to be members of the Skid Row Bar Association.

Pepe kept a store-front office here, from whence he ran his real estate and bail bond business, a tidy little operation, where one hand washed the other, where he could use his real estate holdings to furnish the necessary security for his bonds.

A large gold-leaf sign on the plate glass window proclaimed

**BAIL BONDS PEPE MEDRANO REAL ESTATE**

**OPEN COME IN,**

and the frame, lintel and transom were all painted a blinding, hacienda pepper-red.

Pepe's office manager was a gentlemanly alcoholic named McWhirter, a courteous soft-spoken drunk usually sporting a frayed undershirt and a pair of baggy trousers with a suspicion of urine about the fly. He slept in the back room, or when the fit was on him and Pepe kicked him out, in the cot house across the street, over Joe Crank's cafe and chili parlor. Pepe's office was an ample room with

a fourteen foot ceiling which was covered in the painted stamped-tin of the 1890's, a room crammed with the jetsam and detritus of old rent-houses, festooned with out-of-year calendars trumpeting the virtues of Carta Blanca Cerveza and the flashier type of Monterrey restaurant. A long walnut sideboard in Calvin Coolidge Jacobean stood at the rear, and ranged along the wall in front of Pepe's desk were a couple of easy chairs and a sofa in red velveteen all of whose springs and cushions had long since lost their will to live.

Pepe, the Chicano with the Italian name, had come up from nothing; his father had been a plasterer in Mission, down in the Rio Grande Valley, and Pepe had had to make it by himself or not make it. He was a brown-skinned, brown-haired man in his late forties, a man with a gold tooth, a warm smile, and with eyes, as Orianne said, "like twin fudge pots." Now, as I drove up, and then parked in the loading zone of the A and A Liquor Store, McWhirter was nowhere to be seen, but I saw Pepe standing in his garish doorway, waiting for me.

Behind him in his office was the night-scene with which I was to become familiar in the years ahead, the family group, static, silent, lit by the Caravaggio glow from forty-watt globes placed in tattered brown watered-silk floor lamps, the grinning, half-proud kid sister brought along for the ride, together with the righteous tight-lipped parents, Mom and Dad, all of them come down to free Billy Gene from those cold gray iron bars.

So here it was Christmas Eve, a cool starlit night after a warm beneficent day, when, in honor of our Lord's Nativity, most of the writ lawyers in town were either stoned or at their devotions, or in some instances both, and when my flossy-glossy friends were nowhere in sight. But Pepe was here; he had called me; he needed me; and I opened the car door and walked toward him with my red fiber briefcase underneath my arm, about to make a cool ten bucks for running a writ; and also, although I did not know it, about to begin to realize, after a quarter of a century, one of my life's fondest dreams.

Yes, Pepe stood there, bland and beckoning, in his doorway:

"Come in," he said, "Mr. Tay, come in. We been waiting for you."

# # #

The North Dallas Chamber of Commerce was a suave well-tailored association of business and professional folk. It maintained a suite of offices in what was then Dallas' most prestigious address. This was at Preston Center, five miles or so from the downtown area, at the corner of Preston Road and Northwest Highway.

Late in 1959, with the new try-anything bravura still upon me, I had joined this affable civic-minded group of right-wingers, and had religiously attended its breakfasts which were held at the droopy-lidded hour of seven-thirty A.M. All of this was an enlightening howbeit unprofitable venture for me, for all that I strove mightily to be bland and agreeable, to steer clear of discussions about religion, sex or politics, and even on one occasion late in the Spring of 1960, to bear a hand with a membership drive.

I was engaged in this last-named harmless pursuit early one afternoon on May 9th and had just made a call on some construction firm out on the Grapevine Highway. When my business was done, I begged the use of a phone to ring up my answering service back at the office. I got a message to call home, and our maid Billie Caron, who had long since replaced Dewranda, came on strong in her penetrating, keening soprano.

"Hello. Oh, it's you, Mr. Tay. Mr. Tay, it's — well it's your mother. Well, she's — well — I tell you — Miz' Tay, she says you to come home right away. She says —," and I hung up the phone and headed for the door, knowing somehow just what had happened.

Mother had been living with us since April 10th, having moved out of the old home in Amarillo after years of indecision and wavering. By this date she had sold most of her things off, given them away rather, calling on her many friends, both black and white, to come by and take away whatever they wanted. Orianne had gone by to pick her up, swinging around to Amarillo after attending an art show in Oklahoma City; and as Mother jumped in the car, with the moving van at the curb loading up the remainder of her stuff, "I've just had the most wonderful time," she cried, "said good-by to all my friends and held my own funeral. But I try not to look at it that way," she went on; "rather, I've been telling people up here that all

I'm doing is trading my home for a grandson."

That night though, her diary told another story:

"Awake in my new home," it read; "my security gone, but God is Our Helper."

Well, in Dallas, the apartment next door was soon to be vacant, and she had planned to move in there, to "do" for herself, to take what meals she chose with us, to spend her time gallery-watching when she felt like it, and to enjoy seeing her beloved son and grandson riding bikes or playing catch out in Lee Park.

So she had come to stay with us then, having spent the thirteen years since Dad's death as a wanderer, a hunter-and-gatherer rather than a planter-and-reaper, a day-coach nomad with a purse-full of annual passes, gravitating from one household to another like the steel sphere in a pinball machine. The bleak and windswept aspect of those years was broken only by two landmarks; and the first of them was centered about her father.

As we have seen, Charles Franey, born in 1859, was of course, ninety by the time the year 1949 had rolled around. Long since retired, he still kept up his old home in Monticello, Maine. He was still active in body, but his mind had begun to go; the sword had outworn the sheath; and Mother felt called to go to him in his distress. She stayed there with him in the chilly lonesome little burg in Northern Maine, for the better part of two years, in many ways reliving the old days of 1893 when she was thirteen, caring for the old man and his fourth wife; and once more her diaries took on a mournful and distressing note:

"Father well in body, will never be well in mind," goes her item for March 26, 1949, written probably with the temperature outside standing at eight below. The entries for the following months tell the story all too well:

"Sleeps all night and most of the day. Too lonesome. Seems like God has work for me in Maine. Ah God, why is it Maine? So isolated . . . . Boiled sap. Went fishing . . . . Mowed lawn. Cleaned my room. Picked cranberries, black raspberries, made jelly . . . Fighting, arguing with Father. Wandering out in rain after him. How long here, Oh God, how long . . . . Father mad and mean . . . . Oh God, God, why am I living? . . . . Father and Guy had fight in Post Office."

One speculates about the cause of the fracas; had one of the participants come out strong for Free Silver, or perchance besmirched the good name of the late President McKinley? At any rate, as the months dragged on, the entries continued, but with mounting anxiety and tension, and once more my mother assumed her role as

chronicler of domestic doom:

"Shaved him, changed him . . . Father up at 3 A.M. and hit my left eye, and I kept doors closed. Father mad, and ran after me with stick. Put chain on door so I couldn't poison him."

Now, with violence, the end was not far off; and on April 23rd, 1951, they took the feisty old man to a state hospital at Bangor, and there, three weeks later, he died.

Well, if one would still like to pass judgment on my mother in the matter of the unpaid promissory note, it would seem that twenty-two years later, by the time her father died, she would have been entitled to have it stamped, by somebody somewhere, Paid In Full.

However that may be, she was released, at long last, from her bounden duty and was free to return to Amarillo and to her beloved eyrie at Woodland Park. It was there in Colorado, some time in the Early summer of 1954, that she met the last of her own true loves.

She often took her evening meal at the little hotel which perched on the slope of the hill just below her. There, one evening in June, at one of the tables, lounged a surly scowling derelict, a tall puffy-faced youth, over-fat and over-thirty. He proved to be the only son and only hope of striving, rich, over-achievers in Seattle, fine enough folk, God knows, and owners of a dental clinic which, financially speaking, seems to have been the next thing to having a permit to go into Ft. Knox with a wheelbarrow. Well, his parents had tried to give him all the advantages, for all of which he had wound up as a buck-ass private in the rear ranks in World War II; and now,

"Just wanders around in that old blue Ford of his," Mother was told in a whisper; "dam' thing's loaded with guns, rifles, shotguns, God knows what. They say the FBI's looking for him — something about a machine gun that he keeps back there. Well, he comes in here ever night, stuffs his face, don't say poodle-dee-doo to anybody — just eats, pays his bill, goes on out, nobody knows where he stays."

At this time, in 1954, with her nonagenarian father some three years in his grave; with her older daughter crowding fifty, and her only surviving son in his mid-forties; still clad in her black Victorian widow's weeds of 1947, and with the headlights of a seventy-fourth birthday staring her in the face; let no one think for a moment that my Mother flinched, nor batted one of her level brown eyes at this new challenge.

Here was a chance to throw out the lifeline across the dark wave, here was a brother whom someone should save; and it was not long before Mother had moved her pie-and-coffee next to his, and let it

be known that not only was she an early riser (her place was just up the hill a few steps), but also that if there was one thing better than a plate of fresh hot biscuits, scrambled eggs and hot ham gravy to start out the day, she couldn't imagine what it was.

"Yeah — yeah," said Lafe Newboldt and stumbled out into the night, little suspecting that he was already hooked, netted, and ready for scaling.

He had shown up at Casa Nora the next morning, of course, along with the rosy-fingered dawn, and he and Nora Tay had started their curious affair. They seem to have spent most of the time talking, and soon she had his story out of him.

There was nothing the matter with the man that a turning back of the calendar a century or so wouldn't have cured; he was a houn' dog man, one who loved guns and hunting and just roaming around the country doing what he dam' pleased. The Army had given him a Section Eight and turned him loose; like me, he had served a hitch on the psychiatric ward but to better purpose. They had set him to leather working, that darling of the recreational therapist (you can cut into all that dead flesh as much as you want to, and burn it, scalp it, shave it any way you want to, and nobody cares); to leather working then, and pretty soon he was turning out a big, handsome purse in tooled cow-hide for this new mother of his.

It could not have been many days, or hours even, before the arsenal was lugged out of the turtleback, broken-down and reassembled before Mother's admiring gaze; before the bullet molds too, were ranged along the window ledges, and not long also, before Mother acquired her own side-arm. This was a natty little snub-nose Colt .38 in blued steel, of the type known to plain-clothes men as a "belly-gun."

For this lethal bit of hardware, The Vet, as Mother soon began to call him, hand-tailored an intricately tooled and stitched holster, and the days soon became filled with target practice and the nights with the making of bullets.

The dairies now, for the following year or so, are starred with happy phrases:

"Drove to our favorite spot on Rampart Range Road. Target practice . . . Out shooting porcupines in the moonlight . . . Fire in grate at night after heavenly day . . . Perfect day, drove to Corley Canyon. Picnic in woods . . . Wonderful talks . . . Drove from Westlake to Lake George, then to Fairplay and Tarryall Country . . . Saw beaver at work. Panned for gold . . . To Echo Lake, saw pine squirrel and buzzard . . . Binoculars, Vet's new elkskin shirt, arrived."

For my mother's seventy-fifth birthday, on the last day of July, 1955, I purchased at Cullum and Boren a peachy little deer rifle, a .257 Roberts with a four-power scope. There was much difficulty about the tailoring of the stock, and a highly gratifying stir amongst the gunsmiths when the little old lady in black showed up for the fitting.

Lafe struggled meanwhile, for independence, trying in vain to make a living from the sale of leather lampshades or from seasonal work as a life-guard in Colorado Springs. His final solution was a happy one; to throw off the domination of his parents, he bought a small house-trailer — with Mother's money — and in this, late in the Fall of 1955 both of them planned a hunting expedition into Northern Arizona. Driving late at night, west of Gallup, New Mexico, they felt the trailer bumping along at the rear, and Lafe got out to change the flat tire.

The previous day, Friday the 4th, had been a fine one, "a perfect day in the clouds at Santa Fe, N. M.," after which they had left at six o'clock to drive south in the moonlight. Around midnight, Lafe had stepped out into the highway then, and into the path of an oncoming car.

"The Vet died, head in my lap, on 66 Highway 1 A.M. Ambulance 60 miles to Gallup. 3 A.M. Father Anthony. St. Mary's Hospital. Sister Felicia. Oh God."

The funeral was held in his father's home town of Austin, and thither I went to attend the services and to bring Mother back with me to Dallas. The Newboldts were there, of course, elegant, sorrowing folk of the Upper Establishment; from them Mother received the gift of Lafe's car and all the guns, and whatever interest he held in the trailer. In a brief disastrous move, the following Spring, Mother squandered several hundred dollars in transferring the car and trailer to Hyannis, on Cape Cod, in the forlorn hope that she could live peaceably on the back lot of Jane's small acreage on West Main Street. Following this debacle, she once more took to trailing around the country, a mourning but not forlorn creature, toting her fully loaded six-gun in her purse, and as a conversation-piece *par excellence*, her precious deer rifle in its tanned sheepskin case.

So then, more than four years after the death of Lafe Newboldt, here she was living with me in Dallas, and here was I, on a Monday afternoon, scurrying home from my Chamber of Commerce work. She had been ailing for the past two weeks:

"This is a different pain from anything I have had before; Son, I guess you'd better call the doctor"; and I had summoned my old friend from Y.M.C.A. Residence Hall days, Jay Madel to her bedside. After his examination, he had called me out into the alley.



(Some sort of art function was going on in the front part of the house.)

"Well Loki, tell you what — just get this prescription filled. We'll keep her comfortable," he said, in the classic, soothing but fatal phrase; "she says she doesn't want to go to the hospital under any circumstances." A few days later, "My son takes care of me," she told Billie proudly, "he sleeps right up above me, and takes me to the bathroom and bathes me," and to me she confided, "Son, I know what it means when the doctor sees the patient and then calls the family into the other room; don't mourn for me when I go; I've had a good life."

So now on Monday, following Billie's call I finally reached home, Orianne met me at the front door.

"It's your mother — she's —"

"Yes, I know — where is she?" and I went in alone to the bed in Rick's room where the small old body was lying, a trace of blood in one corner of the mouth but her face still prim and indomitable; and I closed the door and sat down by her side and tried to cry, but couldn't.

"I dreamed I was in the kitchen," she had told Orianne a few days before, "and there was a wonderful smell of cookies being baked, and somebody came up and said what wonderful cookies they were; only they were *your* cookies, and not *mine*"; and a few months back of that, the diaries had furnished a still stronger clue:

"Wandering up the stairs alone and as so often in dreams got lost in barns, cold and skidding down endless stairways. Also, terrible nightmare of being in big building with no outlet and had to find the street to get home. At last I found a midget man who took me to River Styx and there large colored man helped me in boat on muddy water, and as I was rowed to shore, I awoke."

And so in the end she escaped us all, and even Death Himself proved subject to her beck and whim; yes, the show was over; she had been to town and seen the elephant, and it was time to head for home; and if so far in this book you have been seeking in vain for a hero, at least you need seek no farther for a heroine.

# # #

In my life, little has come to me by direct frontal means; for the most part, it has been widdershins and round-about, zig-zag and cut-on-the-bias.

The play, *A Kiss for the Mayor* still moulders in Til Briese's desk at S.M.U., although from time to time he dusts it off and buzzes it away to some play contest, from which it returns unhonored and perhaps, who knows, unread. From my part in writing it, though; from the publication of *The By-Paths of Chaos*, and perhaps from my confiding to Til one of my intended epitaphs (He Loved Beautiful Cars and Beautiful Women, and the Beautiful English Language); from all these, Til had gathered that I had some facility in and certainly an enormous reverence for good writing. So it fell out that, when in the Spring of 1959, he was asked to teach a course in creative writing in Dallas College, he begged off and suggested me instead.

Teach? I had never taught anything, with the exception of the sales management courses at Martine's and, a quarter of a century before, the little class in the basement of the Central Presbyterian Church. God knows I had logged enough time as a student, including a six-day quickie seminar in creative writing sponsored in 1931 by the Pen Women's Club of Amarillo and taught by Blanche Y. McNeil from the University of Colorado. In the past I had been an *aficionado* of Professors Irwin and Elrick B. Davis at Washburn, of Garth Fleeker at the Law School, and of Conrad Bomar in Dallas College; from them I had picked up an inkling, if not yet the knack, of a free-wheeling, razzle-dazzle, evangelical style of instruction.

Well, what the hell, I thought; this was the Try-Anything Year; so, after making an appointment, I drove out to S.M.U. to see Maria Mylar. Maria was in charge of getting up the catalogue for the fall semester; and now I parked at the rear of Fondren Library and scurried across the campus toward Dallas Hall. The grass and trees were green with the promise of Spring, and as I walked along, with my novel and my book-review clippings under my arm, I thought I caught a glimpse of my doppelganger, of my ghost of sixteen years before, walking beneath the elms, hating the prospect of going to war and yearning for the professorial life. (And off there to one side,

was that my good fairy, whispering, "Have then your wish!" brandishing her magic wand and vanishing into the shrubbery with a snicker?) Anyway, I bounded up the steps and between the Corinthian pillars of the old red-brick building, and breezed into Maria's office on the second floor.

I found Maria to be a delightfully plump and smiling woman somewhere on the right side of forty, and she and I made good friends at once. We chatted briefly, and she hired me on the spot. I was scheduled for an hour and a half on Tuesday nights: Fifteen weeks; total emolument, two hundred and fifty dollars. This broke down to about ten dollars an hour, and when you counted grading papers, preparation and outside conferences, to somewhere nearer four or five. But I brushed all that aside and it was yesyesyes time again as it had been on other, earlier occasions.

"Do you want to set any limit on the class?"

Maria's question was simple and direct and her smile guileless and pure, for all that she was trying to tell me something, something which was basically against the best interests of her employer. After all, I would be getting a flat fee, and the more pupils, the more profit for Dallas College. Once more, I made the lordly expansive gesture: "Oh, no; let's just holler up a crowd and I'll take on the lot"; a statement which was to cost me untold midnight oil in the nights ahead.

Well, so the bargain was struck; and some five months later, at seven o'clock of a Tuesday night in September, I found myself at the S.M.U. parking lot that lies between Ownby Stadium and the Highland Park Methodist Church. I was alone in my car, and my allotted classroom was half a mile away. My books and brief case were at my side; I was in a profound state of depression, and high as Kilroy's kite on gin.

Earlier in the month I had gone up to Denton to see my friend Burin Docklee and he had seemed so tall and striding and successful, with his ten thousand and more a year and his full professorship in the bargain; and earlier that same day, Nora Brandon had been at the house, swinging through town on one of her triumphal tours. To greet her we had invited Charlie and Sheila Conway and again, they all seemed so radiant and assured, and I was doing nothing, really, and felt that I was as nothing in their eyes. Yes, I sat there in my car, while the campus revolved slowly around me, and finally, a few minutes before the witching hour of seven-thirty, I cranked up the motor and drove on up toward the Science Building where my class awaited me.

The room to which I was assigned was in a brand spankin' new four-story structure, a neo-Georgian pile of rufous brick and white

stone located on the north side of the campus. It was a handsome but no-nonsense edifice, with floors of polished terra cotta and with virgin unsullied blackboards; the walls were plastered in a restful shade of apple-green and the chairs of yellow hardwood had the new smell still upon them.

I went down the hall to my class, and careening in the door, walked to the platform with the elaborate caution of the half-drunk, and turning, faced the class. Good old Gwen Shook, who had feared that there would be an embarrassing lack of students, had come as a volunteer to swell the numbers, but she need not have troubled.

The room held perhaps sixty chairs, and forty-seven of them were occupied. With a show of competence which I was far from feeling, I unfastened the walrus-hide briefcase which had been a present from Mother a year before, and got out my texts, *Creative Writing* by Rice Institute's George G. Williams, and *The Elements of Style*, by Strunk and White.

I stood up and talked wildly for half an hour or so, and then announced the lesson for the night.

"I want everybody here to write something; just anything — the story of your life; your last summer's vacation, just anything."

"You mean *right now*?"

The question came from a startled female on the front row, a pert brown-haired little woman with the aspect of someone who has just been requested to step out from the audience at the circus and take a turn on the high wire.

"Sure," I said easily, "why not? This is a writing class, isn't it? Now everybody just go ahead and *write*."

I was taking a cue here from Sinclair Lewis, he who, so the story goes, had once faced a writing class at Yale. "How many of you men here want to be writers?" he had asked; and then, after the show of hands, shouted, "Then why in hell aren't you at home writing?" and stalked from the room.

By now, although no longer pot-valiant from the gin, I had gained new confidence from the respectful if unearned attention that I was getting from my genteel middle-aged audience. I indicated that I'd be down the hall in another room, where I could offer a critique of every student's work without disturbing the rest of the class.

They all bent to their task then, and I strolled on down the hall and awaited my first customer. Pretty soon they all drifted in, one by one, with their paragraphs in their hands, ready for my criticism. Every one was given as much time as he wanted, and by the time I was faced with the last one, it was well after eleven o'clock. A strange quiet hung over the classroom and the building itself, as I looked into the face of a young man who wore long, heavy hair and

a fixed, brooding expression. I took up his paper, and I could feel his eyes on me as I read. It was pure paranoia — violent, obscene, personal abuse of me; me, whom he had seen that night for the first time, and who had done nothing more harmful to him than to come to class pale with inexperience and stoned on gin.

"Well, you've got a good thing here," I said at length, looking hard at him and trying to stare him down, "it's got a certain cadence, and a definite feel for the idiom. Work on it some more and bring it back next time."

I rose to go, and saw to it that he went out of the door ahead of me. We proceeded down the hall, and it was then that I found that we were locked up together in the building; the janitors had all gone home (after all, what damned fool would still be teaching at midnight?) — so both I and my wild-eyed student went back into the classroom, raised a window and dropped to the ground a few feet below.

"See you next week," I called out in what I hoped was a bright and cheerful voice, and got in the car and drove on home.

I never saw him again, but a year or so later heard that he had been committed to the State Hospital at Terrell; and perhaps he is there to this day, still penning beautifully worded diatribes against me.

Well, after that things settled down a bit; I never again drank before going to class; only one student stormed into Maria's office and demanded his money back; only one person (I have always suspected a certain professor at the law school) objected to "Loki Tay, the author of that dirty book," being on the S.M.U. payroll. Maria squared the first beef by a thirty-dollar refund, and the other by a stout-hearted facing-down of the self-elected guardian of the campus morals. I continued to teach all that Fall, and through the next Spring. In January, I hit Maria up for a fifty-dollar raise, and at the same time was sage enough to restrict the class membership to thirty or so. At some time, along in March or April 1960, I finally began to feel that I had got the hang of it. My initial terror had long since evaporated, and to help matters along, I had developed certain gimmicks and fringe benefits.

One of these was the Budweiser Seminars, to which we would adjourn after class. Roscoe White's Corral was on Mockingbird Lane across North Central Expressway and safely removed from the "dry" and hallowed precincts of S.M.U. In the back room we clustered around a big circular table to ingest hamburgers and draft beer, to discourse mightily on writing, politics, sex, art and religion, to decry the plight of Man in a hostile universe, and to hand down decisions affecting the fate of empires. The white middle-aged wait-

resses were mightily intrigued by us and by our palaver, and I suppose pleased by our tips: "They're just a bunch of *actors*," I heard one of them confiding to the manager one night as we filed up to the counter to pay our bill; and certainly the meetings there established enormous class rapport and added an extra fillip to everybody's little night-on-the-town.

In addition to the Seminars, I began to accumulate a shelf of books on writing and on the language itself, the biographies of writers and on the devious ways of agents and publishers. All these I lugged to and from class, where I trumpeted their virtues from the platform; Kempton on the short story, and Henry James' *The Art of the Novel*, the various texts of Paul Engle, Wallace Stegner, of Foster-Harris and Stanley Vestal, and the philosophical works of Mario Pei and of Jespersen. Nobody escaped without at least hearing of such folk as the Fowler brothers, Ernest Gower, Eric Partridge and Herbert Read, while the poetasters were exposed to Ciardi's *How Does a Poem Mean*, to Babette Deutsch's *Poetry Handbook* and to Anne Hamilton's *Seven Principles of Poetry*. The playwrights got a mild dose of Walter Kerr's *How Not to Write a Play*, and everyone was urged to peruse the life stories of writers, from Boswell's *Life of Johnson* on down to Caldwell's *Call It Experience*, Somerset Maugham's *The Summing Up* and Edith Wharton's *A Backward Glance*. These last-named were magnificent books of their kind, containing as they did the axiom that the only way to get to be a writer is to work at it, and that the time to start is now.

I always came to class early, around six-thirty and soon had twenty lineal feet or so of blackboard covered with the outlines for the lesson. While lecturing, I never sat down, but rather prowled back and forth in front of the class clad in T-shirt or sweater, and slacks. As best I could, I kept up a running patter of jokes, personal comments and literary anecdotes, which some of the students found highly entertaining and which others must have found overwhelming and perhaps even oppressive. I made out and distributed name-tags, and then made it a point to call on every member of the class at least once during the course of the evening. In a further effort to promote variety, I arranged for an occasional guest speaker, and with some of these, I was successful; with some of them not.

Karl Lindblad was a friend of mine, an amiable family man who had been a fictioneer for The Big Slicks. He was now engaged in the steadier and more profitable trade of realtor in University Park. One night he regaled the class with some of his experiences and gave a few pointers on the craft of the short story; but then, to my astonishment and dismay, concluded with the sour comment, "But I'm sure nobody here really wants to be a writer; it's a hell of a life, and

honestly, I'd be the last to recommend it."

I had better luck with another and more humble toiler in the literary mines, but one who was still at it. This was an intense blond woman, blue-eyed and sinewy, who had sent her daughters through S.M.U. by writing confession stories (Forced to Abandon Our Baby; All the Other Kids Do It. My First Date Told Me; I Forgot My Nurse's Vow; My Son Calls Another Man Daddy). With the class, she was a hit from the very first, as she outlined some aspects of formula fiction, and especially those of the Sin-Suffer-and-Repent variety. A few days after our class meeting she wrote to me from Ft. Worth, and I still treasure the letter:

"Dear Mr. Tay: What a pleasure it was to meet with your class last Tuesday night! You are so talented and handsome and vivacious, and I met such nice people afterwards at the cafe we all went to. Many thanks for a delightful evening."

This effusive note was signed "Lola Jean Edwards," and contained an unforgettable P.S.:

"Did I ever tell you that, really, I don't like you very much? You are entirely too smug and well organized?"

In spite of, or because of, all that, we became good friends and I tried to help her with a serious novel. Her heart was in confessions though, and to that she returned, and is probably still at it today, getting her plots from the agony columns of Dear Abby or Dr. Joyce Brothers.

Every fifteen-week semester included class sessions on fiction, non-fiction, poetry and always, at the end, agents and marketing. As to literary agents, I informed the class of the sorrowful axiom that you can always get one when you have begun to sell, just as a banker is a man from whom you can get money if you can prove you don't need it. As to marketing, I found a use for some of the courses I had taken in the School of Business Administration.

Taking a cue from the ponderous and expensive magazine reader-characteristic surveys of such folk as Sindlinger and Starch, I urged my class to do the same, on a more homely but still effective basis.

"When you get a magazine like this," I said, holding up a copy of *Secrets*, "and find twenty-five ads promoting the sale of flashy, inexpensive women's ready-to-wear ('Frederick's of Hollywood, black lace Frenchie bikinis, \$1.98; housedresses in gay, vivid prints, \$3.84'); nineteen ads offering ways to make quick and easy money at home; eight on feminine hygiene ('Let's Talk Frankly About Internal Cleanliness'); ten on vanity press ('Ideas Wanted for Songs and Poems'); eight on photos and novelties ('Baby Shoes Cast in Bronze, \$4.98'; 'Old Snapshots Retouched'); patent medicines ('Woman Tortured by Agonizing Itch'; 'Amazing New Discovery for

Relief of Piles’); fourteen on cosmetic and beauty aids; and four on reducing diet and exercise (‘They Used to Call Me Fatty’); you can begin to get a profile of the sort of person who is your prospective reader. Flaubert used to ‘slant’ his stories for his cook; it isn’t going to hurt you to ‘slant’ yours towards this itching overweight composite who has just bought a copy of *Secrets*.”

Afterwards, shaking a paperbound copy of *The Writer’s Market* in their faces, I would urge on the troops:

“Damn it, there are more than fifteen thousand magazines being published in the United States. Somewhere, one of them waits for you. Just forget the stuff you see on the news-stands. Hell with the *Post* and *Cosmo*, and even *Argosy* and *Screenland*. Yes, you’re going to be a lot happier,” I continued, referring to the text as I went along, “just starting out as writers, with such markets as *The Marine Corps Gazette* (‘Buys humorous military anecdotes at \$10 each. Pays on publication.’), or with the *Tobacco, Confectionery and Variety Journal* (‘Uses merchandising and display articles of benefit to the retail tobacco variety store, around 1000 words. Pays 30¢ per inch; \$3 per picture’); or perhaps with *Conquest* (‘Well-plotted fiction with solid religious core — inspirational verse up to twenty lines — slanted to upper high school and lower college level. Reports within six weeks; half a cent a word for prose, ten cents a line for verse.’). Well then, I’d say your motto should be, to Publish Where You Can; as Erskine Caldwell says, ‘If the important thing in your life is to get your work into print, it will look good to you no matter where it appears’.”

Along with all this, I quoted Charles Ferguson’s observation that we speak a hundred words for every one that we write, so that good writing can be learned from good speech. I preached the value then, of learning to speak, not so much correctly, as effectively and appropriately, and of listening to such speech whenever possible.

“If you know what to watch out for, you can learn to write by listening to radio commercials while you’re doing the ironing,” I told the skeptical housewives. “Hellsfire, if you know what you’re looking for, you can learn to write by reading billboards or even classified ads.”

“Suspicious verified,” ran two words that I had once noticed in a classified ad for a private detective agency; and I pointed this out as superb example of the effective use of the language in a humble field of endeavor.

In addition, I taught that talent was interest; that there is no such thing, really, as talent, in that for one person who lacked it but would work, there were dozens who had it and wouldn’t. Like most teachers, I found my most formidable road-blocks to be not lack of



ability, but rather apathy, or other interests, or a touching, primitive belief in magic ("I don't want to write; I just want to be a writer"). Yes, my most serious rivals were not lack of talent, but rather drinking and screwing, not to mention the bridge table, the golf course, needlework, and, every marriage being a graveyard of talent, the care and feeding of time-jealous children and husbands.

Of course, all these things, the books, the magazines and lectures, the Budweiser Seminars and the anecdotes, were as naught compared to the critiques, where the aspiring author could hear his work read aloud in class and commented on, perhaps with praise, perhaps with blame, but still discussed and recognized. I finally came to realize that it was for this that most of the class members had planked down their two bucks a night, and began to give my criticisms more time, thought and attention. Here, I labored mightily to be compassionate and understanding, and my written criticisms, for all that they were oftentimes illegible, were of a kindly, helpful nature. As I have said above, I cared more for interest and attention than I did for talent; I was looking for the striving, caring, rather than the talented, pupil, and I verily believe I found and developed them in great numbers.

Recognition, then, was the first order of the day, and then, after a year or so, I began to offer publication as well. *The Hyer Hall Review* was a "slim volume" all right, an octavo brochure, really, of twelve pages; but to the nineteen writers who burst out into print therein, it looked like *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Ladies Home Journal* and *The Saturday Review* all rolled into one.

The material was of course, excerpts, character studies or vignettes, slices of life, and yearning, introspective poetry, most of it on a good, journeyman level. The Professor himself did not escape the gifted, vitriolic pen of Muriel Brown, she who like Lola Jean Edwards, afterwards became fast friends with me:

" 'There is no such thing as talent,'  
Said the speaker from the stand.  
'There's no such thing as talent,'  
And he made me understand  
That a writer's made, not born,  
And his art is mostly toil,  
And inspiration's second  
To the burning midnight oil.  
You can't pick talent up,  
Pinch or punch it, mash or move it.  
'There's no such thing as talent.'  
And he wrote a book to prove it."

Well, all this, and heaven, too. So it was, that from the first, I

shamelessly wooed the class, and at the end of every semester, treated everybody to a sherry-and-coffee party at my home.

At these Last Suppers then, after the amenities and the refreshments, the guest speaker and perhaps some folk singing, there would come the hour of hush and wonder, when the class magazines, newly minted by Jerry Pavlik of the Merchants Press at Taylor, would be brought out and distributed. For a considerable length of time nobody would speak, reading and re-reading his own contribution, or else pretending an interest in that of his neighbor.

Into this class then, for years I poured my very soul. I gave it everything I had, and my offering was returned to me a hundred-fold, both in hard-won self-esteem and in the esteem of others.

"Thanks to your special help, I have twenty-four radio interior design talks on 352 stations in U. S. and Canada," wrote Eugene Frazier; and, "I couldn't get started at all, until I took your class, but I've been writing up a storm ever since," said Barbara Freeman; and "Jackie comes home from your classes just glowing and ready to get back to her writing," architect Al Rueberry confided to me one day.

As the years went by, some of my pupils began to achieve publication: Wilhemina Hedde got a novel accepted; Dale Simpson saw some of her delightfully risqué articles accepted by *Rogue* and *Male* magazines, and amused the class as well with her couplet,

"Tonight I feel that I must write or sin;

So put aside your book; I've lost my pen."

In addition, retired Salvation Army Commander John Morrison on my advice gave up his ambition to become a writer of romantic verse, and published an inspirational article in *Sunshine*. Mai Whiteside got into *True Confessions*, and Freeman Hartley into *Skin Diver*. Lee English made *U-Haul News*, with an article on prospecting for emeralds in Ecuador; Joe McCracken saw his article on pronghorn antelope flower into publication in *Texas Game and Fish*, and Eva Boyd became a contributor to *Practical Nursing*.

Without too much brag-and-fuss, and at the risk of appearing fatuous, I can state my belief that after a couple of years I became a truly superb teacher, and achieved what was for me a rare and true excellence. On a deeper level, this action of mine, which combined a drive for prestige and power with a socially worthwhile and acceptable achievement, this seeking to deserve something by hard work and dedication instead of by being "cute and wonderful," to my mind represents one of my great break-throughs, one of the signal victories in my lifelong struggle against dependence and immaturity.

With all that, it is sad to report, that by January 1963, after seven semesters, I had worn out my welcome at Dallas College. New

blood was required, although that last semester I still had the full complement of thirty-two in the class. Nothing daunted, I went into business for myself and shifted my activities to the Unitarian church, where I rented the Sunday School Chapel for ten dollars a night. Then later on I moved the operation to my home, where my candle flickered a semester or so and then went out. On a chilly sorrow-filled night in January 1966, when four students showed up on the doorstep, I knew I had had it. The next day, with a heavy heart I stored my black notebook away in an old cardboard file at the office, and there it rests to this day: However, as we shall see, by January 1966, there were other matters afoot, and the air was heavy with the smell of other fish a-frying.

# # #

"Well, son of a bitch! So I can do it, after all."

I was sitting alone in my nine-by-twelve office, some time in January 1960. It was less than a month after that fateful Christmas Eve at Pepe Medrano's, and now I r'ared back as best I could in my moulded plastic chair and gazed up at the ceiling. My eyes held a soft bemused expression, and one hand held a check for three hundred and seventy-five dollars. I waved the check beneath my nose, and its bouquet seemed to me like unto that of fine old Burgundy.

"Yes," I confided once more to the ambient air, "so I can do it, after all; so it's going to be all right."

Ever since March 1935, and even more poignantly during the past ten months, I had cherished the dream of being able to hack it on my own as a lawyer; and now with this fee, and other smaller ones which, thanks to Pepe, were beginning to flow in, I knew that I was going to succeed.

For by now Pepe was calling me on all his writs, and as a bondsman who ran a big ad in the Yellow Pages, Pepe had plenty of business. The writ referred to was the old common-law one of habeas corpus, and in the Dallas of those days, it was an essential element in the freeing of prisoners who had not been formally filed on, but who were being held for investigation. The obtaining of the writ constituted the practice of law, and as such, of course, was forbidden to a mere bondsman.

"It burns me up," bondsman Red Delano remarked to me in later years, "to have to pay some dam' lawyer twenty-five bucks just to go up to the bench and say, 'Plain DWI, Your Honor; no wreck,' — just to get the bond set; anybody could do it."

With the obtaining of the writ then, whether in the dead of night or the blaze of noon, and the signing of the bond by the prisoner, both writ and bond would be hurried down to the sheriff's bond desk in the Criminal Courts Building. After a check of the "wanted" file, a release would be issued, and with this in his fist, the lawyer would scurry up to the basement of the City Hall and get ready to habeas the corpus, to receive the body of his sheepish but grateful client.

"And many a burglar he's restored,  
To his friends and his relations."

I often thought of this bit of Gilbert and Sullivan fluff as I waited for my client to come down, lounging in the narrow drafty corridor, near the swinging doors outside which, a few years later, Lee Harvey Oswald was to be more or less formally introduced to Jack Ruby. The judge who had set the bond would also have set a date for a hearing on the writ, a hearing which seldom if ever took place. On the day indicated, you merely appeared at the court clerk's office and asked if your man had been filed on.

"Hey, you got a number yet on Bobby Wayne O'Dwyer?"

Usually the number would come back right back at you, to be used for the posting of a bond for appearance in court; but sometimes the answer came back, sweet as the trumpet of Gabriel. "They say, 'Nothing to file'," — and you could turn to your client with the air of Percy Foreman saving Candy Mossler from the electric chair; "Well, I've got them to drop all the charges," following which you and your client would repair to Joe Crank's cafe for coffee and mutual congratulations.

Even if, as usually happened, a case were actually filed, there was no great problem. You merely collected another hundred or so to handle the matter in court; slid in a new, "push-pull" bond to insure the client's appearance on the date of trial, and sat back to wait three or four months for the case to show up on the docket. Over the years, the population's rush to the cities from the rural areas had left the judges out in the sticks with little else to do but go fishing, hunt quail, drink beer or chase women in the long golden afternoons, while in Dallas and the other great urban centers, the courts were jammed, as the rural-dominated legislature turned down its hearing-aid to the frantic pleas for more big-city courts.

There were at this time only four county criminal courts to handle misdemeanors, and four criminal district courts to handle the felonies; and on any given morning, the nine-o'clock docket would show from five to fifty cases to be got rid of that day. Five to fifty then, any one of which would take from half a day to half a month to try. As a result, the D.A.'s cop-out men were busy combing the jail, and his cop-out assistant attorneys were busy with the cop-out defense lawyers, working out deals in exchange for quickie pleas, and the defendants would be lined up before the judge's bench like customers at the check-out stand in a super-market:

"You're Emilio Valdez. You're charged in this case by information with driving a motor vehicle on a public street or highway while intoxicated, on the night of February 14, 1960, in Dallas, Dallas County, Texas. How do you plead?"

"Guilty."

"Based on your plea of guilty, I find you guilty as charged, and

affix your punishment at three days in the county jail and a fine of one hundred dollars and costs. Go with your lawyer, now," and His Honor would hand the legal-sized manila folder back across the desk-rail. Later on, the fine and costs would be paid, and the defendant would mosey down to the jail at ten o'clock of a Friday night, pay his fine and forty-five dollars costs, get racked in before midnight, spend the next twenty-five hours in jail, and stroll back out around one A.M. Sunday morning. Unluckily enough, in those days, he would have lost his driver's license for six months or a year, but in later times even this inconvenience was abolished with the coming-in of such amenities as the occupational driver's license, probated sentences for misdemeanors, and the privilege of laying-out extended jail sentences piece-meal, over successive week-ends. There was as yet no provision for the issuance of Green Stamps upon the payment of costs, and none to allow the use of American Express Credit Cards for the remittance of fines.

On that January day then, in my office, after a while I ceased to fondle the check, stamped it for deposit, and with a jaunty stride, took it down to the mailbox on the corner.

"You can hear them sigh and hope to die,

You can see them wink the other eye,

At the Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo."

"I could never paint Loki — he is a defeated man," Chapman Kelley had commented after completing his lovely portrait of Orianne some five years before; but if he could have seen me on that morning, he might have changed his mind.

Yes, my journal for that month shows gross income of \$1,158.95, and expenses at just a little over \$75.00.

To me, this was as the wealth of Ormuz and of Ind, and a few weeks later I strolled into Rob Bookman's office and arranged to move downstairs.

There, in a suite occupied by an answering service and a mixed bag of insurance peddlers, manufacturers' reps and the like, I could have a private office, a rug on the floor, and a blond, leggy receptionist to give the proper impression out front. I sold off my little squawk-box Ansafone and gave Orianne the bamboo screen for her use at home.

Meanwhile, the writs continued to pour in, and with them more and more, cases of my own, misdemeanors for the most part, along with wills and divorces, traffic tickets and small collection matters. I found too, that my expensive and painful hours of psycho-therapy at last began to bear fruit; over the years I achieved some sort of maturity and with it became a skilled and patient counselor.

"Well, Mr. Tay, I feel a lot better now that I've talked to you,"

was a comment that began to crop up now in my interviews, one which had been notably lacking during my earlier years of practice. For all this, I never managed to outgrow my fear of men, and of affluent men in especial, and continued, unrealistically enough, to regard them as scowling, black-browed creatures of another race, whom one could never hope to conquer but at best only to placate or amuse. My clients then, remained for the most part small business owners or skilled working class folk of both sexes, who repaid my absorption in their problems with something that bordered on wonder, and who regarded me as someone possessed of legendary wealth and prowess.

"Bring me giants!" bellowed Cyrano; and in the same mood, I now felt that I could handle anything. Without a qualm and before I learned better, I single-handedly took on negligence cases, workman's comp., and even on one occasion procured a design patent from Washington.

On the whole, it was happy mindless work, much of it done out of doors and late at night; and I would careen out Stemmons Freeway after a trip to the city jail at midnight, filled with a wild exhilaration, my hip pocket bulging with tens and twenties, my left hand pounding the dashboard of the car and my voice resounding through the night.

"Bastards!" I cried out, "Oh, bastard sons of bitches!" knowing now that I had the world by the tail on a downhill pull, and referring to certain folk who shall be mentioned later, folk whom I was certain that I had at last overwhelmed.

My triumph was set back only slightly one day in the Summer of 1960, when my friend and fellow counselor Doc Robin plucked me by the sleeve. We were standing in the corridor outside the sheriff's office, halfway between the white marble staircase and Jerry Bywaters' W.P.A. mural of Judge Roy Bean and his Law West of the Pecos.

"Say, Loki — want to tell you about something."

"Yes. What is it?"

"There's some whispering around, about your cornering all the writ business."

"Well, hell; what's the matter with that?"

"Well, they say it isn't exactly ethical."

"Not ethical! What the hell, Doc, what the hell?"

"Well, I suppose you realize that when Pepe calls you, it's him you're working for, and not the client; after all, you get your money from him, and not from them. Right?"

"My God; what's the matter with that? If it'll make everybody happy, I can get them to call me direct; ain't nothing wrong with

him recommending me to them, is there? Huh? What about that, Huh?"

"All right, all right," said Doc, gentling me down with a friendly pat on the shoulder and a wise smile. "Now on, just make sure that it's your client, and nobody else that calls you. OK?"

"Why sure, Doc, sure; if that's the way everybody wants it."

From then on, I requested Pepe to get his clients rather than himself, to call me; but in this, and in the matter of whose the hell clients they were in the first place, Pepe and I drifted apart. He went back to Tige Lemmon and other members of the S.R.B.A. for his writs and I ordered such bonds as I needed from Red Delano or from Rexie Bromberg. Over the years though, Pepe and I kept up our friendship; I never lost my affection for him as the man who had tossed me a line when I was sinking, and something in me must have appealed to him. On one occasion, after our break-up, he presented me with a handsome briefcase of burnished harness-leather, and after his death, I sent flowers to and attended his funeral, and addressed as graceful a eulogy as I could manage, to his widow.

So Pepe gave me a leg-up, and as it proved, a leg-up was all that I needed. At our house, the combined yearly incomes of myself and my wife from both gallery and the law, and counting bonuses and stock dividends from Martine's, soared from \$4200.00 in 1959 up to an intoxicating figure of \$14,500.00 by the end of 1961. Contrary to one of Parkinson's laws, as our income rose, our expenses declined, at least in the realm of transportation.

Sneakily taking advantage of Orianne's absence from town one weekend, I scuttled up to Economy Motors at Inwood and Lemmon and came back in a second-hand VW microbus with a snappy beige-and-lemon paint job. Our infuriating gas-gulping monster of a station wagon was palmed off on some unsuspecting vendee, and I settled down to enjoy the economy if not the prestige of my new purchase. Orianne was not so happy; "and what does Mrs. Tay think of this?" Jake Fowler my Texaco Man asked me one day with a leer; and "Did you come in the *truck*?" my wife was greeted one day as with white gloves, hat and purse she clambered out of the over-the-wheel door, to attend a high tea at Libby Stube's.

In spite of all this, we had some wonderful trips in the car, camping out in the cedar brakes around Duncanville and on one occasion driving to Presidio. There, in the company of Dr. Will Dawson and his brood from Corpus Christi, and Mary Lu Landers and hers from Dallas, one morning we all crossed the Rio Grande over to Ojinaga. There, we caught the Chihuahua al Pacifico for a hilarious junket into the Tarahumara Indian country in the mountains around Creel.

All this time of course, Rick was with us, standing on the thresh-



old of five of the best years of his life. He was growing now into a tall pigeon-toed youth, handsome in a brooding, dark-eyed way and with a wonderful, slow-breaking smile. His head was surmounted by a walnut-brown cap of hair, and his slope-shouldered frame was like that of a horse, powerful but delicately susceptible to shock. He was an obedient, willing boy, who had, as the saying goes, "never given us any trouble." What trouble there was, we as parents had given him, rearing him in our chronically disturbed household and in a neighborhood populated solely by the towering, solemn giants which adults are to children.

However that was, we both adored him, and occasionally I was reminded of the Hindu goddess Parvati, she who once bent upon her son Ganesh such a loving look that it burned his head off, whereupon some helpful bystander replaced it with that of an elephant.

In June 1961, Rick was nearly thirteen, and had completed his seventh year at Stephen J. Hay Elementary. There, he had attended classes in good health and spirits, had played some trombone in the school band, and clad in a helmet two sizes too big for him, played football with an aloof judicious air and an almost total lack of conviction.

For the past six or seven years, we had kept up our friendship with Curt and Vi Leverett, and one evening early in the summer of 1961, they stopped by the house for a drink. The talk fell easily into a discussion about our children.

"Say," said Curt casually, little suspecting the influence his words were to have upon us, "why don't you apply for a scholarship out at St. Luke's? Kim's been out there on one for a year, now, and is crazy about it. They're looking for people like us, who are, well you know, different."

This was wine to our spirits; we had never allowed ourselves even to dream of anything like this. St. Luke's, located five miles or so to the north of us, was one of the best and (what else?) one of the most expensive prep schools in the Southwest. Of course, we lost no time in buzzing out there with Rick for the examinations. The results were not long in coming back. Yes, they would like our son very much, and on a half-scholarship, or seven hundred and fifty a year. Our family situation, we understood without being told, was, like the Pullman porter's pint of whisky, "just right."

Well, we were all "just right," then; and so starting in September, I got up a little after six o'clock every morning, so as to have Rick at the corner of Oak Lawn and Blackburn by seven-thirty, to wait for the huge, bumbling, Navy-blue St. Luke's bus to pick him up.

Ironically enough, early in that Spring of 1961, I had made a vow.

I had been seated with Orianne on the front porch, watching the feathery arcs from the lawn-sprinklers beneath the big oak trees.

"I'm going to resign from the upper middle classes." I said stoutly, "or rather, from striving to be like them, to play the Bourgeois Gentilhomme." Here though, in the Fall was I, happy as a hypochondriac with a new prescription, making chit-chat with Headmaster Oxenford, rubbing elbows with such members of the social Establishment as the Hawk Silvers and the Walter Fox-Martin's, and from a distance drinking in the dark wild beauty of Flora Widenheimer, Flora, who along with artist Ruth Tears I had long considered one of the most fetching creatures this side of El Paso.

Yes, for the next five years we revelled in the St. Luke's milieu, along with Rick, freezing our butts and yelling, "'Way to go, St. Luke's!" at football games, or helping out with the hot-dogs and cokes in the Band Mothers' booth, while our son played trombone in the band or later on, galloped around on the field as a halfback at soccer.

Yes, these were his great years, when he learned to say, "Sir," and to wear a coat and tie to class; when he came under the influence of male teachers who were virile, dedicated and exuberant, with a flair for learning and a love of athletics. Then finally, in May 1966, he was graduated, and we gazed at his smiling senior portrait in the school annual, watched his performance in a Dixieland quintet at the Senior Follies, and with smug, self-congratulatory smiles, eyed his accomplishments as they were listed in the 1966 *Javelina*:

"Rick Martine Tay

1961

Honor Roll 9, 10, 11, 12

Javelina Staff 12

Band 9, 10, 11, 12

Outstanding Bandsman Award 11

Band President 12

Brass Choir 10, 11, 12

Soccer 9, 10, 11, 12

Soccer Letter 11, 12

All-conference First Team Soccer 11

Tennis 9, 10, 11

"Ricochet" — uncompromising individual in nearly all aspects — wears Mexican paisano hat on Saturdays — band member for several years — adept at tromboning — one of the soccer team's best — original book bag — switches between bikes and VW's for transportation."

In such fashion, then, our son gladdened our hearts, by his life

extended ours and, as a son should properly do, filled up many grievous chinks in the lives of his parents. It was he also, who indirectly brought about the publication of my second book.

About a hundred miles north of Dallas and nearly halfway to Oklahoma City, lies the Lake Murray State Park. It is 22,000 acres of woods and lake, a recreation area with the usual features of a lodge and cabins, picnic tables, fishing docks, marinas, ball diamonds, boathouses, riding stables, trailer parks, and most important of all for me, youth camps.

There were three of these last-named, built with C.C.C. conscript labor in the early Thirties, and for me, going up to them every summer seemed to constitute a very special kind of Christmas.

I would drive up on Sunday afternoon, with the thermometer hitting a hundred and one, and drift into the Main Lodge around noon to see who was there, perhaps to have a beer with the Rev. John Wolf or Margaret Schick from Tulsa, or to greet Tim and Isolde Duffel from Midland. Later on, I would drive to the Youth Camp over Scenic 77, a two-lane asphalt snake which twisted between stands of hackberry and post-oak, seeing on either side the meadows of short brindle prairie grass baking in the sun. A few miles north, and not too far from Ardmore, I would turn right at the sign and not too long afterwards, come into the camp itself, with an inexplicable surf of happiness beginning to break inside me and the rare, brutal shock of glee quickening my pulse.

Here, the main buildings were of huge logs hewn from the forest and dyed a rich manure-brown, and the little cabins dotted amongst the trees were of the same hue, all equally innocent of air-conditioning or other refinements, their floors of scuffed, long-leaf pine, crawling with ants and scorpions, and with the yellow-bellied wasps dive-bombing the screens.

From afar I could see the figures beneath the trees, drifting here and there in the hot sandy clearing or seated in the shade, most of the bodies still upright and not yet strewn about like corpses on a battlefield, flaked out from fatigue, excitement and the lack of sleep.

This was the Unitarians' L.R.Y. Camp, run by the denomination's Liberal Religious Youth and made up of the high school grades from nine through twelve. Most of the boys, shirtless, barefoot, and sporting Buffalo-Bill hair-do's, were already looking unwashed and unshaven, but most of the girls, for all that they wore no lipstick or makeup, carried themselves better; their fairy-princess hair cascaded over their shoulders and they were clad in everything from tennies and cut-offs to sandals and navel-baring bikinis, with an occasional tendril of wistful pubic hair escaping from a leg-band like a morning-glory vine curling up under a brick wall.

Already the place had begun to take on the aspect of a medieval Court of Love; I could hear the twang of a plucked stringed instrument and the haunting notes of a recorder, and almost everywhere, somebody was being hugged or kissed, or hoisted high in the air in the attitudes made famous by Renaissance paintings of The Rape of the Sabine Women. ("Gareeee! Put me down — *raht now!*") And later on, when they got the amplifiers set up, the atmosphere would become gravid with the erotic beat and grunt of acid rock, which would hang upon the air like a sense of guilt.

At this camp then, I arrived with Rick late in the August of 1962. I had been asked to be a counselor, which consisted mostly of just being there, to appease the adult sponsors of the program, who from their air-conditioned cocktail parties back at the Lodge regarded the goings-on at the Youth Camp with a mixture of apprehension and envy. In times past, both here and at the Lodge, I had been asked to run creative writing workshops, the offerings for the most part consisting of poetry which was filled with the ineffable *Weltzschmerz* of seventeen. This year however, I had been asked merely to sing a few folk songs in the cool, or more accurately, the heat of the evening. I had noticed though, a plethora of standard or folk guitars strewn about, and I resolved to give a course instead, on how to become a folk singer.

Wisely stationing Rick in another cabin, where he could stud-around with his own gang, I ensconced myself in a little brown hut on the side of a hill where it was shady and pleasant. Here in the afternoons I could stretch out in my camp-chair, and here my only companion was a beautiful six-foot black-snake who crawled out from under the floorboards, sunned himself on a flat rock, and then slid off through the Johnson grass, intent on his own affairs.

Yes, I had nothing to do all day, besides eat, sleep and swim, but to get ready for the night's casual lecture. There was nothing to this, I thought, as I began to scribble a few notes, sketching out the program for the first class. Soon though, I was in it head over heels, as my past years of performance, the good times and the bad, came flocking in upon me, and from the very first day I found myself caught up in it, busy all day long, and filled once more with the old ecstasy. (Andre Maurois speaks of the introspective rapture of the creative writer "which resembles so much that of the expectant mother.")

"My God!" I shouted to nobody in particular, I who in the past six or seven years had torn up at least twenty-five first-chapters of bad novels; "My God! I've got a book!"

I do not remember what the weather was, on a certain day in October some three years later, but at this point the pathetic fallacy

will come to my aid and make it a sunny one, with the zing and loveliness of Autumn in the air. At my office in the Bookman-Jones Building, I had unwrapped the package, and then carried the paper-bound book around with me all day, slipping it into my briefcase when I went to the courthouse, concealing its presence from everyone, but from time to time secretly caressing it in the fashion of a lonely aging spinster reaching down to stroke her favorite cat. Back in the office, at the end of the day, I took it out once more and fondled it, flipped through the illustrations and, after the fashion of authors, drooled over some of my favorite passages.

It was an over-sized pocket-book, about five by seven, better bound and printed, and in some ways better written, than *The By-Paths of Chaos*. The cover was banded in orange and purple, with the title picked out in black and white:

THE MINSTREL'S HANDBOOK.

by Loki Tay

Oak Publications.

\$2.45."

Opposite the title-page, the credentials were impressive, at least to me:

"Also by Loki Tay:

The By-Paths of Chaos (Novel, Signet Books)

Folkways Records:

Ballads of the Great Southwest

From Valley Forge to Guadalcanal

The Elfin Knight and Other Enchantments

Cecil Sharp Favorites from Two Continents

Songs of the Blue and the Gray."

(The past thirteen years, since that first record in 1952, had been busy ones.)

Of the book's one hundred and sixty pages, a hundred and twenty were mine, the remainder being occupied by folk songs printed with text and music along with snapshots of prominent folk singers — Sleepy John Estes, Theo Bikel, the Carter Family, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Woodie Guthrie, the New Lost City Ramblers, and many others beside.

Yes, here it was October 1965, and writing the book and getting it published had taken more than three years. After its conception at the L.R.Y. camp, I had toiled on it all the rest of that summer and into the Fall, banging it out on the old Remington which I set up on the dining room table, or when the weather was fair, on the front porch. By the time August 1963, had rolled around, I had a manuscript ready to send off, and having somehow got hold of an agent, mailed it off to Barthold Fles in New York.

At this time, Oak Publications, under the inspired hand of Irwin Silber, was in full flower. It specialized in folk material, and had a long list of instruction manuals and song books to its credit. It had a close tie with Moe Asch of Folkways Records and was the publisher also of the folk song magazine *Sing Out!*.

I had mentioned the book both to Moe and to Silber, but once more I hoped to climb up on the Big Bandwagon, and so at my instruction, Fles dutifully scuttled around town to first one hard-back publisher and then another, for the full course of a year. At the year's end he took it over to Oak, where it was accepted on the spot.

I was sent a four hundred dollar advance royalty check, and Fles solemnly took out his ten percent, a measly forty dollars, of which I was duly ashamed, and so air-mailed him another sixty to make up an even hundred.

That was in the Summer of 1964, and the book was scheduled for the fall lists; well, then, surely for next Spring? Well, at any rate in October 1965, as we have seen, it finally came out, and now I was no longer that forlorn figure, despised and rejected of men and publishers, the One-Book Author.

"One more book, now," somebody told me, "and you can be in *Who's Who*."

Well, whatever prospect of fame the book offered me, certainly it offered enough advice to the aspiring folk singer. The text dealt variously with such matters as the definition of folk songs and of folk singing; the selection of the proper instrument; how to take care of the voice; how to get the stage and lighting set up to your best advantage; how to build up and most important of all how to remember, your repertoire; what patter was, and how to obtain it; programming, or what to sing, for whom, and for how long; how to get your name in the paper and keep it there; and lastly, how to make records, get an agent and to behave while "out on the circuits and sweeping the East."

That Fall and Winter, I did what I could to promote the sale of the book locally. Martine's and Whittle's, McCord's, and the Doubleday Bookshop were all kind enough to use the statement-stuffers which I sent them; Allen Maxwell gave me some nice space in the book page of *The Dallas Morning News*; and Oak Publications saw to it that it got around in certain quarters nationally. Not that all the reviews were kind, by any means.

*Autoharp Magazine*, for instance, put me down hard for a general air of insincerity, stating testily, "there are enough flippant people around without their being in print." In addition, Don Hunt in *Broadside* gave me the back of his hand with:

"I found that my personal feeling while reading the book was one of embarrassment for the author and his intended humor." (This book) "is of value only to the youngest and most fiercely dedicated, and they may well have outgrown it by the time they are halfway through."

Friends of course, and others were more kind, and the sale of the book went forward briskly; the folk song fire, sparked by the Kingston Trio a few years earlier, was in full blaze; but for all that, I did not receive any more royalties of note beyond a few trifling payments here and there. For years it stayed in-print, and I would purchase it in lots of a hundred at half price, and give it away to this pretty young folk singer and that, at Dallas Folk Music Society hootenannies.

Thus for me it continued to be a happy book, and every now and then I would get it out and skim through it, remembering the sun-burnt kids at Lake Murray, the shouts and the kissing, and, basking on his own rock, my beautiful black-snake friend.

# # #

It is all very well, they say, for a man to dream of Camelot and Elfland, of Cockaigne and the Big Rock Candy Mountain; but buying a ticket there is generally considered disastrous. Nevertheless, in February 1962, with my new-found money jingling in my jeans, I resolved to go to Europe.

A month or so later, I was standing on a broad open expanse of mosaic pavement, posing for a tourist-snapshot of myself with the Eiffel Tower in the background. I was saying to myself, as I had said so often in dreams, "I've always dreamed about being in Paris, but now I'm really here"; and, for the first time, not waking up to find myself back in Dallas or Topeka.

I had flown to Amsterdam from Houston two days earlier, with a single stop at Montreal; and then, "That's the soil of Europe," I had whispered about twelve hours later, upon viewing the black furrows streaked with snow just outside Schipol Airport. Soon enough, I was through customs and was being handed the keys to a brand-new Volks rental-sedan. In this I breezed on down the expressway toward Brussels, and the next day, en route to Paris, I was happy to be driving through stone-built towns that I knew from the novels of The Great War — Mons and St. Quentin, with Soissons and Chateau Thierry not too far away. Every twenty kilometers or so I would run into, and be indifferently waved through, roadblocks manned by machine-gun bearing poilus on the watch for contraband arms, explosives or Algerian activists. Late in the afternoon, I snaked through the long winding streets of Paris, the cobblestone ways known to my dreams, and somehow managed to come at last to my destination, the Hotel Eiffel Elysée.

This four-story, four-dollar-a-night caravanserai was a "clane and dacent place" located on the Right Bank near the famous tower itself; the Metro roared beneath its front windows all night long, and less than half a mile away the Seine drowsed its way toward the sea. I had got the name of the hotel from our musical friends the Otis Epinets; this was their favorite roosting place in Paris, and here I was to meet their son Hector who was lodging at a *pension* nearby. After checking into my tidy little bidet-and-basin room, I sauntered around the corner and rang the bell at Hector's place.



Hector, a slender, dark-haired cosmopolite of nineteen, was spending his *Wanderjahre* in Paris, ostensible studying cello, although, as I later learned, he had been here six months now without purchasing an instrument. He lived in Proustian splendor on the third story of an elegant townhouse, one which boasted a marble foyer and a Shell service station on the ground floor. Now at my ring, Hector came down, welcomed me and led me upstairs.

"We'd better walk," he said, "the *ascenseur* works pretty well coming down, but going up I don't trust it worth a damn"; and he pointed to the clubby little two-passenger cage, built around 1901 of black wrought iron and polished mahogany. We walked then, up a staircase papered in heavy flocked wallpaper the color of good beef gravy and lighted by stained glass windows, the entire effect being what was just beginning to be called "camp." Upstairs, I was introduced to Hector's landlady, a Mlle. Honfleur. She was a charming spinster in her early sixties, who on the spot invited both of us to dinner that night. Returning at the proper hour, then, we dined in state, with the maid serving as butler, beneath crystal chandeliers and a ceiling of sculptured plaster.

Later on, Hector and I excused ourselves and drove off to the Opera. There, in the magnificent baroque setting (the murals of Marc Chagall were not as yet installed), we stifled in the top row balcony, and were looked upon as American swine for removing our jackets. There, too, I heard my first and last bilingual opera.

"My God," said Hector, "just listen to *that*; the principals are singing in French, but the chorus is doing it in Italian," but none of this seemed to bother anyone, including me, who couldn't tell the difference.

A day or so later, Hector drove with me to Chartres and then to Fontainebleau, where he left me and caught a train back to Paris. I wandered on down then, through the middle of France, through the pleasant fields of early Spring and the storied towns, to Marseilles. There on the water-front I half-hoped to be accosted by dark-eyed ladies of the evening, ladies whom I somehow imagined would be attired in fringed, ankle-length ball-gowns dating from 1910. My only companions however, in the little bistro where I ate dinner were two soldiers fresh from duty in Algiers, and my only activity was to try to keep the rickety door closed against the mistral.

The next day out of Nice I picked up two hitch-hikers. They were from Switzerland, they said, and were thumbing their way to Johannesburg. They were young artists, out to see the world, with their black beards, dungarees and heavy sweaters. Somewhere along the Riviera di Levante I stood us all a lunch in some little resort town, and I treasure the snapshot of me with one of them seated on a park

bench beneath the royal palms, me in sun glasses and beret, with a bottle of wine in one hand and a hard-cheese sandwich in the other, drenched in sunlight, happiness and the fumes of Chianti.

I dropped my passengers off at a youth hostel in Pisa, wishing them bon voyage and wondering how one hitch-hiked across the Mediterranean and down through the Congo. I spent the night somewhere in the vicinity of the Leaning Tower, and the next day drove on into Florence. In the Piazza del Duomo, an agricultural fair was in progress; fire-red tractors and cultivators practically scraped up against Ghiberti's doors, and the whine and snarl of power saws mingled with the snort of Vespa motorscooters and the cries of the postcard vendors.

At the Uffizzi, I strolled into what must be the most beautiful room in the world, where the Botticellis hang about the walls. There I worshipped a while before Venus Anadyomene, and then next day drove on up the auto-strada toward Milan.

All along I had been doing the Europe-on-Five-Dollars-A-Day bit, stopping at little hotels where English was neither spoken nor appreciated, and on the road, even with my Michelin maps, usually lost and unable to understand directions. At Milan, early in the afternoon I went shopping for leather goods in the boutiques beneath the glass dome of the arcade, meandered around inside the big cathedral, and took in the opera at La Scala that night.

From Milan, to complete my circle-tour, I wheeled on up through Switzerland and along the Rhine, and came, after a couple of days, back to the Netherlands. I had been driving, driving, driving; and now, with two more days to spare, was looking for a place to rest. With this in mind, I stopped off at a certain famous town, but found it crowded and noisy and decided to push on, for all that it was there that, on a narrow stone walkway, I saw my first miniskirt.

"The Piece of Utrecht," I said out loud, and stopped to goggle, thinking also, "Earth hath not anything to show more fair," and little suspecting that I and my fellow stockholders in Thigh-Spyers Incorporated, were just entering upon our most deliriously successful decade. I drove on up the road then, and about fifteen miles short of Amsterdam, came to rest in the quiet little town of Maarssen.

There, at the only hotel in town, I was practically the only guest. I had a room with a big Dutch featherbed and a bay window from which I could watch the bicyclists and the wooden-shoed workers who were repairing the street. Here also, I sat down to write the story of my trip, a story which a month or so later I sold to Jeanne Barnes, Travel Editor of the *Dallas News* for thirty-five dollars.

When my two days in Maarssen were up, I drove on to Amster-

dam and out to Schipol, where I turned in my Volkswagen, got my deposit back, and clambered aboard the big four-motor jet, preparatory to chasing the sun back across the Atlantic.

As we pulled away from the runway, I settled back in my seat with a sigh. It had been a dream—trip, and during most of it I had been in a dream-like state. The weather had been clean, cool and zestful; but now it was time to go home and weather out certain dark clouds which had been gathering for a long time over my head in Dallas.

About three years before, in April 1959, I had received the last of my pay-checks from Martine's; these had represented four months' severance pay which I had cagily requested in September 1958, be paid to me the following year when, as I correctly estimated, my income was going to be drastically reduced. I received the last check then, and thereupon turned, snarling upon the Martines and bade them not come near me, my house, my wife or my son, ever again.

Of course there was a price to be paid for this, and I paid it a thousand times over. For months and then years I was torn with guilt and remorse, and even when I came back from my trip to Europe was still in the throes of this agony. My journey though, seemed somehow to purge me, and now finally after so long a time I could go to the Martines and beg their forgiveness.

"Oh, that's all right, Loki," they said, and I was taken back into the fold but surely not without certain strong reservations on their part.

Well, that was one battle fought, and I suppose won, when you consider that it was a conflict which should never have occurred in the first place; but it was only part of a larger *Götterdämmerung*, a World War of the emotions, which commenced in 1961, and that was started, in all innocence by a casual acquaintance named Charles Bing.

Bing, a pleasant-spoken chap of middle age and triumphant tailoring, was a realtor whom we had known as a visitor at some of the Gallery functions; but now, as he dropped into my office late in 1961, his mind was not on art.

"I suppose you've heard," he said easily after I had waved him to a chair, "that the Woman's Club is on an expansion program. You're right across the alley, there; and Mrs. Erich Ronson is President this year, and I wondered if you'd be interested in selling your property at a nice profit and perhaps let me find you something elsewhere."

There was nothing in this offer, or so I thought, to cause me any great distress. For years, we had been getting nibbles from this realtor and that, and we had been approving changes in the zoning for

a long time. Along with the stock market, Oak Lawn property values were zooming, and the times were fast disappearing when you could buy land for a dollar a square foot, with an old frame house thrown in. Yes, Oak Lawn, and the Lee Park area especially was fast becoming a place of restaurants and night clubs, of smart new office buildings and high-rise apartments; and later on, of hippies, dope pushers and rock-music festivals.

Meanwhile, Bing had been talking on and on, with the easy-but-anxious persuasiveness of a man trying to "put a corner together." No price was mentioned, although I envisioned an old wood-cut of myself at the door of my humble cot, and before me Margit Ronson mounted on a milk-white palfrey, motioning to her groom to hand me a deer-skin bag clinking with coins of archaic denomination.

"She's gi'en to him the white money,

The white but and the red O,"

somebody with a lute was singing in the background; and with all that in mind, I chatted on with my visitor for a spell longer and then finally shook his hand and saw him to the door.

"Charles Bing dropped by this afternoon," I said casually to Orianne that evening at dinner, "wanting to know if we'd sell out to the Woman's Club. Naturally, I told him we weren't interested"; and I went on eating with all the fatuous assurance of a drunk blind-man nearing the edge of a precipice.

I do not recall that my wife made any reply to my statement; but before long the entire neighborhood was aflame with the news, and from then on, her nightly dispatches to me, with talk of prices-per-square-foot, of threatened encirclement, of "their building up around us," and of final hold-outs, took on the fever of Virginia City at the height of the gold rush, or of oil boom towns of recent memory in East Texas.

All of that lasted about a year, at the end of which the Woman's Club moved out, abandoning its premises to the mice and spiders. Their new quarters were out beyond Northwest Highway, on Park Lane, an elegant structure designed in High Empire style by architects Beran and Shelmire. It nestled cheek-by-jowl with Temple Emmanuel and the Hillcrest Mausoleum, so that the ladies were in the company of some of the wealthiest Jews and the most expensively interred Gentiles in Dallas.

By then though, the hunt was up, and in Oak Lawn the towering figure of Charles Bing was replaced by that of Will Doss. Will was a good-natured but shrewd oil operator and coupon-clipper, a socialite who had been a gallery patron in the past. Now, it appeared, he had got Tim Stanfield to design an office building for him, and the site was to include our lot at Hood and Hall Streets.

At this time, as may be recalled, I was in high cotton and a state of grace, at least financially, if not spiritually. My income was well over ten thousand a year, and my needs, or so I thought, were still simple. My house and the single car that I required were both paid for, and a goodly proportion of their cost and upkeep written off as gallery expense. Orianne was doing well in the gallery business, and we cantered along comfortably on her house allowance of thirty-five dollars a week. I had not yet learned one of the most painful and bitter of life's lessons, that it is one trick to make money, and quite another to keep it, or at least to conceal it from your wife.

Yes, Rick was in St. Luke's, and I was on the verge of moving into a "real" law office, with a big law library and "real" legal secretaries out front. This was up on the second floor, where Rob Bookman and some other barristers held forth. These offices, recently done over, sported plate-glass partitions and door posts of golden-hued anodized aluminum, and after I moved in, the walls were ablaze with paintings from the Tay Galleries.

"For God's sake, who offices in this *chateau*?" fellow-attorney Louise Di Maggio declared one day upon popping in for a visit.

Yes, at about the time I was making the bravura gesture of "re-signing from the upper-middle classes," I was also confiding to Orianne in the full fatuity of bourgeois bliss, "We will stay right here and lead a professorial life; here, with our little car and house, with the gallery, and the tidy little law practice. Yes, we'll settle down and enjoy life right here; see Rick through St. Luke's and then through college. After that — who knows — we can travel some more, see the world —."

I could have added also, at this time, the soul-thrilling fact that after a full thirty years, I had at last shaken off my neurotically-caused intestinal pains and terrors; the nightmares had ceased also, and even the Paris-dreams of yore. Now I ate and drank whatever I wished, venturing a swig or two of bourbon before dinner or a few *cervezas* with the Mexican Plate at the Spanish Village. I could see a pattern emerging from my life. Every few years or so I would get restless with whatever job I had and want to move on to another. Anybody with such a roving tramp-steamer disposition needed a snug little harbor out of which to operate; needed a debt-free car and cottage and a patient wife.

Beneath all this hard-won maturity, this self-realization though, lurked the old arrogance, the old sickness, now aggravated by the new prosperity. Was it Churchill who said of General Montgomery that he was "magnificent in defeat; insufferable in victory?" At any rate, it was Orianne, about this time, who opined, "Once anybody gets money, he starts demanding more of others and less of

himself"; and, mixed in with everything else was the threat which I felt to my established way of life. I, who had been or at least felt myself to be, the unofficial Mayor of Lee Park, now felt myself about to be thrown out of office, reduced to a faceless anonymity, a name-plate in some apartment-house foyer, another mailbox on the street in some plain-vanilla suburb.

"God damn it," I shouted once to Orianne, striding about the room and then finally breaking into sobs of rage and frustration, "I'm like a man who is just getting over pneumonia, and you're the one who comes into the room, for Christ's sake, and throws open the God-damned windows."

Years later, Rick remarked, "Yes, I can remember those times — do I ever remember them — lying there in my room at night, listening to you and Mother fighting."

"The sun rose and set, but the battle still raged on." In those years, I was often reminded of this line from one of the books of my childhood. However, no war lasts forever, and finally this one, too, was over; or rather, the first phase of it was. It may be recalled that we had paid a little under seventy-five hundred for our house and lot some eighteen years before. Now the price of twenty-seven-five was being offered to us; and I must confess that this "green-back poultice" as the damage-suit lawyers say, did much to alleviate my pain and suffering. So, then, sometime in the early summer of 1963, after a three-martini lunch at the Cipango Club with Will Doss, I, like Don Juan's Julia, whispering I would ne'er consent — consented.

Yes, on June 26, 1963, Orianne and I signed the contract of sale. I felt like Lee at Appomattox, but a Lee, for all that, who had just turned a neat profit on the Civil War. ("Every tormented soul in the West," opined the French philosopher, "reminds me of a hero of Dostoevsky's with a bank account.") Well, at any rate, about a month later, on July 19th, we executed the deed, and then, six days later, we in turn received another deed — to a house and lot in Preston Hollow.

In his book, *Dallas Public and Private*, Warren Leslie states:

" — one might say that a family with an income of \$25,000 a year or better will endeavor to live somewhere between the beginning of Turtle Creek Boulevard and Forest Lane, a distance of about eleven miles, and between Central Expressway to the east and Midway Road to the west, a distance of about four miles . . . This is the headquarters of the Establishment."

Somewhere in the northern part of this Magic Rectangle, Ulvik Drive ran a mile or so between the Cotton Belt tracks to the west,

and Hillcrest Avenue to the East. Our address was 5819, which lay west of Preston Road, in a long block which was tidily paved, curbed and guttered, for all that there were no sidewalks. Out here of course, nobody walked but the maids, the dogs, and the kids going to and from school.

On our block, the houses, squared-away precisely on their hundred-foot lots, were reminiscent of the "little boxes" of Malvina Reynolds. All were "brick-venereal" single-story, single-family, owner-occupied residences, of the type known to realtors as three-two-and-two (three bedrooms, two baths and a two-car garage). Every one, by virtue of the original deed restrictions, was located at least twenty feet from its neighbor and fifty feet from the curb; originally too, these dwellings were to be occupied "by white persons only, not excluding bona fide servants of any race." Of course, the efficacy of this last-named stricture had long since been flushed down the drain by the Supreme Court, and the day had long since passed when servants would consent to live in servant-houses; for all of that, no black, brown or yellow man lived on this street, and the whites were about evenly divided between Gentile and Jew.

On Hood Street, we had been located directly in the flight pattern of Love Field, and had been sorely plagued by jet planes which seemed to be flying through rather than over, our livingroom. Out here in Preston Hollow the planes were a distant murmur on the horizon, and the street noises were mostly confined to the grumble of traffic on Preston Road, the purr of late-model Pontiacs, the buzz of power mowers, the trill and warble of the mockingbird and the screams and shouts of children at play.

The smells here were from new-mown grass and honeysuckle in the Summer and from fireplaces and barbecue pits in the Fall. It was a long-married neighborhood, with few divorcees or lonely-hearts. Along this hard-working, genteel avenue there were few screwballs or characters; the atmosphere was amiable but reserved; and in fine weather, few people sat out, but rather stayed indoors in thermostatic comfort, huddled in front of The Tube or at the bridge table.

It was a healthy active street, one which swarmed with dogs, kids and bicycles; here one saw no invalids, and even Death Himself was an infrequent visitor, confining his attentions mostly to household pets or somebody else's aged mother. Yes, it was a gentle neighborhood, safe to the point of monotony, and even its sins and crimes were of a forgivable, white-collar, non-violent nature — a little innocent pot-smoking and teen-age statutory rape along the creek-bank a few blocks to the North; some amateur titty-pinching and butt-plooping at Christmas parties; violations of the dog-leash law;

speeding on North Central Expressway; and, every April 15, some artistic thimble-rigging with IRS' Form 1040.

Few if any of the womenfolk "worked"; their husbands were occupied variously in the lower echelons of the professions, or as well-placed bureaucrats, manufacturer's rep.s, or at the helm of prosperous family-owned businesses. Few were retired, or could afford to be; the median annual income hovered around fifteen thousand a year, and the median adult age somewhere on the sinister side of forty.

"How far north will these fools go? My guess is St. Louis."

This had been the comment long ago of one realtor, who expressed his wonderment at the rush to build dwelling houses in this area, where the black waxy soil was great for cotton, but treacherous as a landlord's promise for foundations. Our house, like many of those on the street, had been speculator-built about twelve years before; its slabs lay directly on the cold bare ground, and over the years, in the shifting North Texas climate, heaved like a dory in a high sea. Our floors were of cheap half-inch pine, inadequately veneered by wall-to-wall carpeting, and the roof was of Number Three shingles; but what matter?

Its style was what you might call Contractor's French Provincial, with wide eaves and a low roof-line; it was fitted out with "central air," and its outside walls were of soft, dust-colored Mexican brick and both its bathrooms were fully tiled. The kitchen boasted a Dispos-All and dishwasher, and the yard was pleasantly shaded by magnolias, sycamores and live oaks of a decent enough height. The final selling price was twenty-three-five, which was a neat four thousand dollars below that we had received for our place in Oak Lawn.

After our purchase, we were six weeks or so in moving in. Will Doss was as yet in no position to start construction on his office building, and we stayed in the old place while the new one was being re-painted and while Orianne and Rick tootled off to Europe with the Martines.

I will not pretend that my snobbish soul was not secretly pleased with our new situation and with my recent purchase of a "second car," a 1958 VW gray convertible. Every night or so, while my family was away, I would wander out to Ulvik Drive to water the lawn, to pick some peaches from the tree in the back yard, and to drift through the empty rooms like a ghost.

Here, on Labor Day 1963, I, the apostle of The Simple Life, the sworn foe of Gracious Living, moved in, and here I settled down to wait. Like an old convict figuring out his time, and knowing from long experience how to do it, I now counted up the years, the months and the days, and at times even the hours, until June 2,



1966. At that time, Rick would be graduated from St. Luke's, and at that time I vowed, I would be graduated from my marriage. Yes, I could and would walk out, then; there would be nothing then, and no one, to hold me. Meanwhile, I busied myself as best I could with my profession, with school functions at St. Luke's and with the painful tortuous composition of my third book.

# # #

I have said "book." I might better have said "booklet," since, although it took more than three years to write, it consisted of only thirty-six pages.

*Where is the Post-Office?* I called it, after a conversational gambit which I used to illustrate one of the points in the first few pages. Joe Pavlik at Taylor had brought it out for me, the covers in white Kremcote calendered paper and the inside of what is known to the trade as "slick book." (As I had anticipated, Fles in New York had casually returned it as unsalable.)

On the flyleaf, three quotations announced the general tone and purpose:

"Gefühl ist alles (Feeling is everything) — Goethe.

I can believe anything provided it is incredible. — Oscar Wilde.

Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you mad. — Sam E. Nona."

Mindful of the dictum of George Bernard Shaw, that you should think as profoundly as you can, and then express yourself as frivolously as possible, I shamelessly employed many of the techniques of fiction. I sprinkled the text with dialogue and anecdote and, shame to relate, with some of the cute-and-coy prose which had marred the book on folk singing. For all that, the basic tenet of the work was that belief is based not on fact but on need, and that this is most apparent in the two Realms of Reason and Reality on the one hand, and of Faith and Feeling on the other. Inhabiting the Realm of R and R (for Reason and Reality), I contended, were such concepts as truth, science and the scientific attitude, reality, plain common horse sense, reason, and the head as opposed to the heart.

On the other hand, inhabiting the Realm of F and F (and Faith and Feeling) were such concepts as intuition, the heart (as opposed to the head), folk lore, belief, feeling, politics, sex, art, emotion (as opposed to thought), faith, religion, and irrationality (or, more accurately, a-rationality).

Once I had got that pretty well laid out, I drew up what I called the F and F Dictionary, "in which everything is A-True, that is neither True nor Un-True, and not amenable to nor alterable by, Truth, but where everything, instead, expresses a Feeling and fulfills a Need.

“On the One Hand We Have  
 (Usually, When I’m Talking  
 About You or Yours):  
 No-Good Floater  
 Jail-Bait  
 Tightwad (fem.)  
 Tightwad (masc.)  
 Mississippi Redneck

Northern Pinko Agitator  
 Shyster  
 Party Girl  
 Lesbian  
 Homosexual  
 Psycho/Nut  
 Neurot  
 Patient Wolf  
 Playboy  
 Dachau

On the Other Hand We Have  
 (Usually, When I’m Talking  
 About Me or Mine):  
 Free Soul  
 Restless Kid Sister  
 Frugal Housewife  
 Knows the Value of a Dollar  
 KKK Member: White Citizens’  
 Councillor  
 CORE/SNCC/NAACP Member  
 Barrister with Alligator Shoes  
 Moonlighting Secretary  
 Still Looking for Mr. Right  
 One of the Boys/Decorator  
 Always Had His Problems  
 Victim of Poor Toilet Training  
 Perfect Gentleman  
 Bon Vivant  
 Hiroshima”

Previously to all that, I had pointed out what I considered the three-fold nature of all things:

“You will note that just a minute ago we were talking about things which were A-True, A-Scientific, and so on. The logician with his T-square mind will tell you that any thing, object, idea, proposition or what the heck, is either

Itself	or	Not-Itself:
That a stone is neither		
hot	nor	cold
but rather, either		
hot	or	not-hot;
that the carburetor on your car is neither		
truthful	nor	a liar,
but rather, either		
truthful	or	not-truthful.

The nifty little combo truthful-untruthful has overtones of being concerned or involved with truth; there is a third aspect here, which is that of not being concerned or involved with truth a-tall; we might even scratch out a diagram here in the sand, as follows:

The thing, object, idea, etc., is

Concerned or involved with truth		Not concerned or involved with truth
True	Untrue	A-True

You can apply the same principle to things, objects, ideas, or propositions, and see that they have not two, but three aspects; they are

Reasonable  
Rational

Un-Reasonable or  
Ir-Rational or

A-Reasonable  
A-Rational

and so on. (Your six weeks' old baby, for instance, is neither moral nor immoral; he's a-moral, and probably glad of it — isn't he?)"

I had priced the booklet at two dollars, and over the years sold enough of it to get back my initial investment of about four hundred dollars. After that I began to give it away to this acquaintance and that, most of whom received it with the stunned but respectful silence with which one accepts a dubious water-color from a favorite aunt.

In addition to all that, I acquired a morsel of kudos from being booked now and then as an inspirational speaker if not philosopher, and was invited to preach on the subject at various Unitarian fellowships: I was even, in the Spring of 1969, invited to address the faithful at Amarillo.

Once arrived, I got a room at the Herring Hotel, into which I had so timorously checked some thirty years before, and was received and entertained with bibulous enthusiasm during my stay. While there, I drove by Fourteenth and Madison to see a tidy little twelve-unit apartment building occupying the site of the old homestead, and just on an off chance, I drove by also, the corner of Sixteenth and Van Buren to see if that green Hudson Super-Six and any of the Bist or Givins girls were still there, sipping cokes. It is a sorrow to report that they were gone, and the Hudson and the drug-store with them.

I returned to Dallas the next day, and after that pretty much forgot about the work, at least insofar as promoting its sale was concerned. In its very first paragraph I had stated somewhat top-loftily that it was being written for the desperate, but as one will already have guessed, it was done, basically, for me and for me alone. As such a guide, over the years, it brought me through many a tortured maze, as I learned to live by its precepts, to speak its hidden language, and through it, to find some measure of peace.

# # #

"Whoever looks within  
 This little book  
 Will say here daily wrote  
 A common man  
 One never shook  
 With passion's frenzy  
 Who his race ran  
 A veritable cart-horse  
 Of a fellow.  
 I may have felt  
 A yearning  
 And a heart burning  
 But all unable to  
 Express it as great poets can."

For about a year, back in the late Twenties, my father as well as my mother, kept a diary. The above entry, "Written between Emporia and Newton 7/23/27" stands on the flyleaf of the little black leatherette book; a volume which contained, about four months earlier, another entry for March 25th:

"What hopes, what longings are in the human breast. Mine at least. Can all be attained? No."

Just what were my father's hopes and longings, his yearnings and heart-burnings, we can only surmise: Probably they were not a great deal different from my own. To be sure, I had a mixed bag of them on a certain fine day early in June 1963. At that time, one may recall, the House War had reached fever pitch; and on that day, ironically enough, I was supposed to be enjoying myself at Six Flags Over Texas.

This was an amusement park which had been erected a couple of years before by Angus Wynne Jr. and some of his wealthy compadres, about halfway between Dallas and Ft. Worth. It was modeled after Disneyland; and here you could spend a delightful day wallowing in nostalgia, go exploring with La Salle, see a gun fight outside the Crazy Horse Saloon or a Confederate Army drill team in action. I had brought Rick and his friend Nappy Epinet out here for a treat. This place was a superb one to take a couple of fourteen-

year old school-boys, but a bad place — any place is a bad place — to be having a fit of suicidal melancholia.

All that day I followed Rick and Nappy about the grounds, bought them ice cream and hamburgers, and all that day the black monkey stayed on my back; I did not know what to do nor where to go; and then finally, at the end of the day, after staying away from the Sky Hook and any other rides that involved getting up above the earth, I knew what I would do. I would go down the next day to Terrell and commit myself to the State Hospital. I would crawl back into the womb, as I had done once before in California; perhaps at Terrell also, there would be a place where I could sit out under the trees, read poetry, watch the airplanes in the sky and the trolley ding-donging its way into town. Yes, next day, oh, next day —

And sure enough, next day — I found myself entering, not the grimy portals of the State Hospital, but rather the apartment of Sheri Ampersand.

Sheri was a lovely girl still enjoying the early thirties, gray eyed and with beautiful legs, small-breasted but with a straight back and proud carriage. She had been in my writing classes, and, like Dale Simpson and Muriel Brown, loved a telling phrase and had a nice touch with light verse. Six weeks before, on a cool sunny day in mid-April, I had phoned Sheri, and then, with a picnic lunch, some books of poetry and a case of beer, driven with her out to the shores of White Rock Lake. Not too surprisingly, she had brought along a thick notebook crammed with her own works, and we read poetry and drank beer all afternoon. On the way out there, with my depression hard upon me, "Oh, Sheri," I said, "let's not go back — ever — let's just keep on driving north, here and —"; in answer, Sheri merely tossed her coiffured locks and gave me a teasing bewitching glance out of those gray eyes.

"Oh, I would," she said lightly, "I would; but I couldn't bear to leave Poody-Cat."

Like Gail Lindquist in *The By-Paths of Chaos*, Sheri kept a castrated male cat, and as I was to find out later, for about the same symbolic reasons. Coming back when the light was failing, we stopped at Roscoe White's Corral where we had been before with the others on many a Budweiser Seminar, and had some more beer and some fried chicken, and then back at her apartment, "Love me, Sheri," I said, "Oh Sheri, love me — now," and drew her toward me.

"This is un-real," she said, "just un-real."

We were standing by the sink and I kissed her once or twice: "You can't be serious," she said; and I went on home. She told me

later that in part her refusal was caused by the fact that she had always considered me homosexual. "Not that you acted like it — after all, I knew you were married and had a son and all — but because you were interested in music and poetry and art — and where I grew up, every man who was interested in things like that, was considered queer."

At any rate, about a month after that, some "character" as she put it, at the Northway Motel wanted her to do a book on experiences which bell boys had recited to him as occurring at the Maple Terrace Hotel. Would I help her with the ghost-writing job? Sure, I said, and to the Northway then, Sheri and I went on the night of May 20th, 1963.

It was a mad wild evening, one of the most eventful of my life. We sat and had a few drinks and got some material on my tape recorder, all of it completely un-usable except perhaps by someone with the talents of Ludwig Bemelmans. Afterwards, "Let's go to Papa Dad's for some barbecue," I suggested to Sheri and we piled into her car and drove over to the corner of Hall and State.

"Don't worry about me," said Sheri, who had been belting down martinis all evening, "I can always drive better with a couple of drinks," and sure enough in a few minutes, we got to our destination. This was in the heart of North Dallas' Black Belt, and the air was heavy with the smell of hickory-smoked meat, exhaust fumes from senile mufflers and an occasional whiff of burning marijuana. The street was ill-lighted, and bursts of Sherwood-Anderson Dark Laughter drifted out from the dusky porches. I reached over and kissed Sheri on the lips and drew her toward me, out from under the wheel, and at the same time pulled her skirt up with my right hand. She was wearing a white long-leg panty-girdle and beautiful nylons which I had been admiring all evening as she sat opposite me on the sofa with her legs crossed; and now it all overcame me, and "Let's go back to the apartment," I said and we drove shakily to her place, somehow forgetting all about the barbecue.

We went into the bedroom then, where a light shone through the high white curtains, and she took off her dress as I disrobed in the corner, ripping off my clothes and tossing them in a heap. Sheri stood before me then in her panty-girdle and hose and I turned her around and went down on my knees to her, and hugged her to me, feeling her stockings and their fasteners in the back, and then got up, erect as a poker and turned her around and unfastened her bra and saw for the first time the small but pointed breasts, risen now in passion, and peeled off the girdle and stockings and laid her on the bed. I loved her long and probably loud, and then rested a few minutes and then went in again. She had black silken pubic hair and

was hard to arouse, but finally came with me, both of us straining and groaning there on the twin bed, with her roommate gone for the weekend.

“Do you want to do it any other way?”

“I don’t know any other way,” she whispered hoarsely, and we went on with our second helping of plain vanilla, her knees flexed and open and me in between them.

In the weeks that followed, I was at a loss in my new situation; I did not know how to act about this, whether I should pay Sheri something, whether I should start supporting her, or what the hell. I was now fifty-five to Sheri’s thirty-two, and ever the late-bloomer, had just begun, it appeared, to sow my wild oats. True, I had just finished racking up a solid quarter of a century of being true, at least technically, to Orianne, but I did not expect any credit for that, marital fidelity being what it is, a sour negative virtue like cleanliness — you don’t earn credit if you bathe — just dis-credit if you don’t. Anyway, I did go around the next day to see Dr. Ozro Hyatt, and got a shot of penicillin. I had brought no rubbers or other protection with me, and found out later that it infuriated Sheri that I would use them, as I soon began to do. In fact, we had our first fight about that very thing, when I told her that I wanted to use rubbers because I got tired of forking over the four bucks to Doc Hyatt every time Sheri and I made love. I found out later that this resentment was common, that women got furious at the very idea that they would have venereal infection — that was for low-class people. Sheri told me that she had had intercourse with at least two hundred men, and I sometimes wondered how — or whether — she had escaped infection.

At any rate, by the time the first Monday in June 1963 rolled around, I had made love to Sheri perhaps four or five times, going by at odd hours of the day or night and then striding on home, feeling like a Caesar in triumph. It was not until that first Monday in June though, that I strolled into her apartment and stayed there for a week, going home only to sleep and letting my law business rock along as best it could. By the end of the week, the new erotic nostrum had done its work and my suicidal depression had fled back into the night. Now I felt as lively and exalted as Tannhäuser in the Venusberg, although one suspects that the Teutonic knight spent little or none of his time in creative writing, and Venus, very little of hers in typing.

For, in between bouts of love-making, of talking about and reading poetry (guess whose?), I sat there in the apartment and worked on an article, thinking, my God, what a wonderful life; perhaps this is what it’s all about, anyway. I was writing the story of a trip which



had taken place a year before, when Orianne and I together with the Dawsons of Corpus Christi and some other folk had zipped by scout-car along the outer beaches of Eastern Mexico. We had driven about three hundred miles, from Matamoros down to Tampico, seeing the giant Ridley turtles laying their eggs in the sand, while we drank beer, ate pompano and camped out on the beach at night. The story of this trip then, I polished up for a solid week, paying Sheri a hundred dollars for it, and then at the end, I went back to my law practice but kept on seeing Sheri as before.

Certainly we had many glorious moments together, not only of love-making but of conversation and companionship. She loved the old romantic poets, and it seemed to me that I had grown homesick merely for the sound of their names. We wrote poetry to and for each other, and in her honor I knocked off a bit of doggerel which showed that I had managed to salvage some scraps of ironic detachment out of all the terror and passion:

“When I was five and fifty,  
Love came to me and said,  
‘Away with maxims thrifty  
And eight o’clock to bed.

‘Although ’tis close to midnight,  
The hour has not yet chimed;  
Behold, ’tis still the id-night,  
And you still in your prime.’

I flung down my bifocals,  
Flushed the Geritol down the john,  
Called a friend, said, “’Tis no joke will  
You with me do the town?”

Later, headed for a motel,  
My hand upon her thigh,  
She turned to me, said, ‘Oh tell  
Me you’ll love me ’til I die.’

Her voice was fading as she spoke,  
The midnight chimes were ringing;  
Up from my armchair I awoke  
To find myself Love’s plaything.

The memory of that night burns on,  
Though in nostalgia misty;  
I pour myself a drink, turn on  
A record of June Christy.”

Folksingers Peter, Paul and Mary were coming on big at about this time, and I would hum their "We spent the summer lost in love / Beneath the lemon tree," as I parked my car around the corner from Sheri's apartment, or sometimes in the very lot itself, half-hoping that Orianne wouldn't chance to see it there, half-hoping that she would. For of course my affair was part of the Big Picture, and this new weapon, or a refinement of the old one of flirtation, I was now using with telling and terrible effect.

"After we moved out to Ulvik Drive," Orianne confided to me years later, "I used to sit out in the back yard after you and Rick had gone to bed, and watch the wind tossing the treetops, and wish I could just die and get it over with right then. But, I'd think that I'd wait and see Rick through St. Luke's, and so I kept on living."

So she also was counting her days and taking her knocks, she who was acting more out of compulsion than out of villainy, she who could not help being what she was any more than I could. Meanwhile I shored up my self-esteem and sought elsewhere the attention and approval that I felt I was not getting at home, spending long hours with Sheri, some of them in making love but many of them in listening to her complaints.

For with all her talent and loveliness, she was what is known to suicide-prevention clinics and the like as a help-rejecting complainer. Her beautiful face distorted with anger, she would go down the long list of her grudges against a world which had steadfastly refused to devote itself to making her happy. She would relate by the hour details from her hard early life as the daughter of a rich but stingy dirt farmer in Eastern Oklahoma and would tell how she had lost her virginity by being raped in the back seat of a sedan on the way home from a high school dance; how she had got the crabs before she was nineteen and how her father had cured them with applications of kerosene; how she had left her brilliant but un-ambitious husband, how he cried when she left, and how she would still borrow money from him when she got broke; how her car wouldn't run and how she was constantly being gypped by crooked mechanics, "most of them more interested in getting into my pants than into my carburetor," (at which I observed that the pretty divorcee is like Ishmael in that she finds every man's hand against her); and how she had lost her fine job as secretary with Wrangel and Carruthers because of some poetic pasquinade which had been wrongly attributed to her.

By this time of course, I had logged many couch-hours of psychiatry and had gained, the hard way, some psychological insight. It took no towering genius to see where her trouble lay and what she should do about it, and I would listen to an hour or so of bitching

and then burst out against her and walk up and down the room shouting and waving my fists.

"God damn it," I would yell, "if you're not going to do anything about it, then why in hell do you keep on griping? And anyway, why is all this happening?" I would conclude dejectedly. "Here it is, the first affair I've ever had with anybody, and we spend our time quarreling. I keep thinking I'll be brought up before the Throne of God at the Day of Judgment, and asked, 'And have you sinned, my son?' And I'll say, 'Yes; once I had an affair with Sheri Ampersand,' 'And what did you do?' 'Well Father, mostly we just sat around and fought — like husband and wife'."

It was this bickering that finally led to our break-up. By March 1964, our affair, if it deserved such a noble appellation, had been going on for nine months or so, and sometime early in the month I went over to her apartment only to be told that she had, well, made other arrangements.

What these were, consisted in being kept by a wealthy hardware dealer who had just retired from the nearby hamlet of Blossom Springs and taken up residence in one of the high-rise apartments along Turtle Creek. He had bought her, as I knew, a new Buick for Christmas, but I had regarded this with more amusement than alarm; but now he was getting jealous, it appeared, and anyway, she wanted to go back to school. She would take some courses at Denton, she said, commuting in the mornings and driving back to the apartment to receive her elderly admirer in the afternoons.

For months on end, after that, I mourned for Sheri, and while listening to Sarah Vaughan's "Eternally" on the record player, wept, cursed, and paced the livingroom carpet at midnight, looking out over the white spire of the Presbyterian church and toward town in the direction of a certain luxury apartment in the vicinity of Gaston and North Carroll. I kept all this to myself, though, knowing that the love-angst of the balding middle-aged barrister must seem as hilarious as the sorrows of the millionaire or the perplexities of the debutante.

I kept up with Sheri in desultory fashion, seeing her platonically every four or five months, and then after a year or so, having occasional sex with her on a friendly, practically incestuous basis. Both during and after the time she was supported by her sugar-daddy, Sheri continued on her storm-tossed career, having a casual affair now and then with first one "character" or another. With a couple of them she fell in love, but finally could not stand either their manners or their lack of ardor and so threw them over. "Oh, he's very charming and cultured, but he's got little white hands and feet; lives with his mother; and is about *this* long" — indicating, between

thumb and forefinger, a distance of about two inches.

Her break-ups, including that with the rancher, were generally of an operatic nature, and on more than one occasion, the man in question found himself being threatened by a loaded .22 automatic held in those lovely, prick-stroking hands. As I heard the recitals of all this derring-do, I be-thought me of the aphorism of Dallas novelist Bud Shrake, that Texas is full of beautiful, mean women.

Yes, I kept up with Sheri over the years. To soothe her troubled spirit, she sought counsel with the college psychiatric counselors, and from them drifted, in one black period, into the city-county psychiatric hospital at Woodlawn. There I visited her, without hope or mention of reward, sexual or otherwise, and thence I bore, after purchasing for her, some smartly cut slacks and a heliotrope tit-hugging blouse, so that she might make the proper impression on the wards. I also at this time renewed the license plates on her Buick, her protector having by then found other and less quarrelsome charms elsewhere. With no hope of reward also, later on I set her up in a beauty-products peddling business, forking over a couple of hundred dollars so that she might buy her initial stock. By then, she had moved back home to Benefee, Oklahoma, where of course the beauty products business promptly went to pot, and where she treated with derision the advances of the local mujiks; and there she started, and in a year or so, finished, a very bad and very romantic, moon-ridden novel.

All this time I was sending her typewriter supplies or the loan of an odd fifty bucks now and then, and always a present of pantyhose or girdles at birthday and Christmas. Well, the years rolled by and I never saw her again, but I continued to cherish her memory, she who so long ago said "Yes," when it seemed to me that everybody else was saying "No."

# # #

It was Anna Karenina, was it not, who "found in adultery all the platitudes of marriage?"

Well, during all the time that I was so deeply involved with Sheri, it had not escaped my attention that she was my only *other* love; that I was being faithful to her, as to an earlier, imaginary Cynara, "in my fashion"; and one afternoon, as we were idly lying naked in bed, I remarked on this.

"Oh," said Sheri easily, "you'll branch out"; and sure enough, a few months after our break-up, I did just that. Yes, for years on end, then, I became attached to this one and that, always seriatim, single-file and never going with more than one at a time. I do not know that Orianne found out about any of this, but probably she did, as I was seen here and there, in this restaurant and that, and doubtless I came to enjoy the dubious reputation of being a triflin', no 'count husband who was slippin' and slidin' around town. By then of course, I was deep into the decade of the Sixties, an era of permissiveness, that of the mini-skirt and the swinging singles, the co-ed dorm and The Arrangement, of topless waitresses and the X-Rated movie. However, I estimated that it would be another twenty years or so before all this tolerance seeped down to include married men in their late fifties going around with single women of half their age.

In mitigation I must add that I did not at any time play the misunderstood husband, held forth no phony promises of matrimony, and never bad-mouthed my wife to my girl friends. Then, too, when every affair was over, it was the woman and not myself, who always drifted away, perhaps to move out of town, or to take up with other, younger and less married chaps than I. In retrospect, it seems that what these women wanted of me was neither a big prick nor a fat pocketbook, but rather someone who was kindly and loving, who would give them courteous and patient attention. Yes, I seemed to have become more of a father-image than a lover-image, and with it all seemed to be solving my problem of over-dependency by helping others to be dependent; instead of continuing to look for Santa Claus, I merely became Santa Claus.

With all this, I found that I enjoyed the companionship of women

more than I did that of men, and so made platonic friendships with four or five women, occasionally taking them to lunch, buying for them *huevos rancheros* and a carafe of burgundy at the Statler Hilton's Beef Barron, and exchanging no more sinful caresses than one peck on the cheek at meeting and another at parting. In the uptight Dallas atmosphere, this innocuous performance, viewed as it was by this acquaintance of mine and that, gave me the undeserved reputation of being a very devil of a fellow, a formidable cocksman of flag rank at least. In time, this too faded away, until I was seen merely as a deeply tanned and silvery-haired, convertible-driving, lunch-and-lingerie-buying old sugar-daddy.

Before all that came to pass however, there was the matter of Olga.

My adoption practice being what it was, I was never surprised to get a call from a doctor. I had never met Andrew C. Lothrop, M.D., but one day early in 1967, his voice on the phone came through virile and hearty, in the crisp tones of a prosperous gynecologist who has everything on his hands but time.

"Mr. Tay?"

"Yes."

"I've got a patient who needs some help in an adoption matter. Just let me give you her name and phone number — you take it from there. OK?"

"Sure thing." I was scrabbling around on the desk for pad and pencil. "Let's have the dope"; and this was how Olga Ruth Marie Tina Kinnard Doolittle Carwile Rivers slipped through the side door and tiptoed upstairs into my life.

Turtle Towers was a brash new thirty-two story red-stone packing-box located on the former premises of Jesuit High School. Soon after Dr. Lothrop's call, I hopped in the Volks and set out along the curving pleasantries of Turtle Creek Boulevard. Before long I was striding beneath the aluminum porte-cochere, through a pair of tall handsome wooden doors, small-panelled in some dark brooding stain and set with over-sized hammered brass door pulls. A closed-circuit TV back of the clerk's counter enabled the staff to see what was going on — in certain parts of the building, anyhow — and a long bank of elevators stood to my right.

Arrived at the twenty-second floor I jaunted down the carpeted hallway and stopped before a door with a night-club peep-hole and a sign, Mayfair Studios.

Bing-boing; I punched the chime set on a spring in the middle of the door and in a few seconds heard a muffled, "Yes?" on the other side. I felt like a speakeasy customer in an old George Raft movie. "I'm Loki Tay. I just phoned." "Oh, yes." A chain and latch rattled

on the inside and the door swung open. "Won't you come in?"

I stepped through the door, and the young woman who had let me in slipped the latch back into place. "How do you do? I'm Olga Kinnard."

"Loki Tay." We shook hands and I slipped a card from my wallet and gave it to her as we wandered into the living room.

The place was light and airy, comfortable but cheerless, after the fashion of an examining room in a swank suburban clinic. There were no pictures on the sky-blue walls, but the carpets were meadow-soft and the chairs and sofa quilted and inviting. Through the wrought-iron railing of the little balcony I could see the Dallas Mountains — the skyline of the office buildings downtown — and the treetops along Blackburn Street, the place where I had led The Simple Life so many years before.

"Would you like a drink? That is, if you have time." The *time* came out something like a New Orleans Irish-Channel *toime*, or perhaps *toy-eem* would be closer to it. She spoke with a curious sidemotion of her jaw, and her teeth behind the childish pouting lower lip were small and even, milk-colored and regularly set, like grains of tender young corn. The sofa had sunk beneath my weight like a Beauty-Rest mattress at the Fairmount, and I looked up at Olga Kinnard smiling above me. Her robin's egg blue hostess pajamas floated around her, and blue satin mules shod her feet. Soot-black hair fell down from a central part over a waxen magnolia-petal face, the face of an Edgar Allen Poe heroine who is about to join, or who has just returned from, the dead. Her thin-lipped smile was a polite but wistful crescent moon, and her skin, marked only by a small roan mole high on one cheek, was soft as damask, with tiny pleated lines like the naughahyde on a fairy hot-rod. Meanwhile, there was this matter of a drink. (What kind of studio was this, anyhow?)

"Sure," I said, thinking, I am Ulysses who is ready for anything; and Olga moved toward the bar, which formed part of the kitchen wall, and on which I could see the remains of a Youngblood's Fried Chicken Special with its paper plates and napkins. "Vodka and tonic, if you've got it"; and pretty soon she came back with the drinks and set them on the plate glass coffee table before us. Her walk was graceful but with purpose, and I had a sense of cotton-picker's thighs and Earth-Mother hips, and not much of anything else, underneath that blue chiffon. "Nice place," I lied. I pushed my briefcase to the other end of the sofa, and suddenly Article 46a of the Texas Revised Civil Statutes seemed very far away. "Cheers." I raised my glass and she did the same, and I turned and looked into her face, at the wide bony intellectual forehead and the small keen blue eyes which had failed to take part in the smile. With her exqui-

site nostrils and small pointed chin she was striking and appealing rather than pretty, and the long fingers clasped around her glass looked steely and capable, like those of a piano-beater of the Franz Liszt School.

"Well," I said after another gulp of excellent vodka and tonic. "Dr. Lathrop told me to call: I guess you know what it's about."

"Oh, yes. I have a little girl: she's just over six now, and I want somebody else to take her for, well, adoption — somebody who can give her the things that I can't — The, well you know — Advantages —." She spoke in a slightly drawling, affected tone, choosing her words correctly after the fashion of someone who fords a treacherous but familiar stream, and she gestured vaguely to the room around her as though to indicate that she was inhabiting some tarpaper shack in West Dallas.

"Well," I said, "beside that, what special reason — what situation —." I floundered around for words as she turned those ice-blue eyes upon me. "You see," she said, "I can't keep my daughter — can't have her — well, up here —. You see — what I do — well, I'm a whore."

I sat my drink down hard and walked over to the open doors of the balcony. "God-damn," I said without looking back at her, "what a hell of a thing to say"; and stared at the scene below. Immediately below me was a beautiful tiled Olympic-sized swimming pool, and facing me the northern exposure of Turtle Creek Square, a high-rise apartment complex which contained a putting green and beside it, two barbecue pits big enough for the roasting of Homeric oxen. Adjacent to it was the building which held the Turtle Club (Members Only) and the Spa, where pampered women could go to have their bottoms spanked, and where pampered executives could go to take off in the afternoon what they had put on the night before at the Club. On the opposite side of Turtle Creek stood the chateaux whose owners a few short years ago had fought like tigers against the re-zoning. The wily and resourceful Louis Bickels had beat their butts in court after a Four Years War, collecting for his efforts a sum which would have ransomed a baron from the infidel during the Crusades. Thanks to him I now stood high above the former Jesuit playing field, and then finally, I turned and faced Olga Kinard.

"'Whore'," I said. "Don't ever say that word again." I couldn't figure out what it was that I was mad about, but I was furious, and kept on talking. "People still amount to something, I don't care who they are. Anyway," I concluded, "you might at least say 'call girl'; and what's this Mayfair Studios all about?"

Olga hadn't moved, sitting on one end of the couch with her



knees crossed and a mocking glint in her eyes. She sucked her cheeks in and nodded her head in some kind of ironic agreement with me. "Those studios," she finally said, "they were for the people that had this place before me, records, broadcasting, I don't know what — I keep the sign up — it helps, sort of —."

"Well, I guess you go down and enjoy yourself in the pool, or go over to the Club and the Spa, loll around —" I was trying not to say, —" and pick up a few customers —"

"No. I mostly just stay up here and work." ("Work," I found out later, had a highly specific meaning.)

All this time the sap had been rising in me like in a Vermont sugar maple in the Spring, and now I went over to the couch and put my arm on her shoulder. "Well," I said, "— then how about —."

She didn't stir a muscle; not an external muscle, anyhow. "That would be all right," she said after a pause, "but then I wouldn't want you as my lawyer — the adoption —, and all —."

I pondered this for a moment, thinking after Kipling that a woman was only a woman but an adoption case was five hundred bucks, and wondering at the strange mores of these exotic jungle folk. "All right," I said finally, "we'll go ahead with the adoption; after all, that's what I came up here to see you about. To begin with, let's talk about you for a while. Is this your — well, usual costume?"

Olga laughed for the first time that afternoon, hunching her shoulders up and giggling like a little girl. "Oh no. These aren't what you'd call trick clothes. Not at all." She smoothed the pajamas down around her ankles, and at her phrase, "trick clothes" I had the fantasy of a female circus acrobat in white leotards and rosined slippers. "Oh yes — trick clothes — that would be something fluffy, a chiffon billowy skirt, maybe, and smoky hose and black lace bra and panties, something easy to get into and out of, heels of course — then you're ready to go out maybe for a hundred dollar trick, for all evening, or — well once I got a thousand dollars for a weekend."

This called up another vision, that of a banquet in the days of Nero, with slave girls, harpists, and peacocks' tongues in honey. "Yes," continued Olga, her eyes dancing, with the air of an insurance man telling you how he won his seat at the Million Dollar Round Table, "and only had to make it with him once."

"Once? What did you do the rest of the time?"

"Just sat around and drank. He was a very lonely man. But now let me tell you about Rose Dawn — that's my daughter —" and I got out my fountain pen and reached, not without a certain air of resignation, for my brief case on the other end of the couch. I scrib-

bled in my yellow ruled legal-size pad for ten or fifteen minutes and then got up and left, hearing the chain rattling behind me as I walked down the hall.

Two or three days later, I drove over the river to Trinity Heights and looked in on the Jagers Nursery. Here, in the presence of Mrs. Jagers I met Rose Dawn, a fair-haired chit of a girl who darted into the room like a mote of sunshine. She was a radiant child, and chatted with me readily enough, but pretty soon, when it became apparent that I wasn't going to be allowed to take a picture of my little adoptee, I left. I had anyway, most of the information which the adopting parents had requested, and the picture could come later.

Before I could get back, however, Fate began to tinker with the script, and a midnight or two later I got a telephone call. "Mr. Tay? This is Olga," and behind the familiar voice was something else that was also familiar, a blur of shouts, curses, ribald laughter and the whanging of iron doors, perhaps something like the clamor that greeted Dante just a few steps this side of Purgatory. (All Hope Abandon, Ye Who Enter Here Without Bail Money.)

"God-damn-you got busted." I felt very happy about all this, for some discreditable reason. "What's the charge?" At least I succeeded in not adding, "as if I didn't know."

"Investigation county vag, and investigation burglary and theft."

"Hellsfire. What time is it, anyway?" This was an idiotic question; I could see the luminous dial on my bedside clock. I answered my own question. "A little after twelve. Well, damn, I can't come down until early in the morning; you've got to have a writ, and the judges won't let us call them after ten o'clock."

"What's that?" Her voice was taking on a slight edge of panic. "Why can't you come down now?"

"Like I said — the judges won't let us call them after ten — but I'll be down first thing in the morning and get you out. OK?"

I was fully awake now and full of beans, but meanwhile Olga Kinnard was cooped up behind bars with a bunch of female D.W.I.'s, check passers, shoplifters, and who knew perhaps even whores — I mean, call girls.

"All *roight*, then — but hurry," — and sure enough, before nine I was talking to Olga face to face on the jail inter-com phone, with the battleship-gray steel wall and the little square of bullet-proof glass between us. All in due time I got the bond signed, ran the writ and was back at the jail with my release, and then was riding with Olga out the Expressway and along Lemmon toward Turtle Creek Boulevard.

"What the hell happened?" I asked.

"Well, you know — for a couple of years — I was using my real name at the time — Tina Doolittle — anyway, I was the, you might say girl friend, that is, well *lived with* this man here in town, Jack C. La Croix. Jacksy was in the rackets, and way up there, big, and he did everything, held up places, killed people for pay, just did anything that needed to be done; as he used to say, 'Runnin' up and down the road lookin' for somethin'; but with him it was really nice, that is we always lived in nice places and he bought me nice things. Then, too, he was always crazy about Rose Dawn, used to bring her ice cream, and then would get her in bed with us in the morning and bounce her on his stomach" (when he wasn't bouncing *you*, I thought) "but he was tough and mean, always did what he said he would — that kind of man. He used to tell me about killing people — 'It just makes me come' — that was one of his favorite expressions — 'makes me come, to see them begging for their life,' he would say. But then one time I got mad at him and slapped him and he beat the — well, beat me up badly"; and it occurred to me that I had never heard her swear; "and I began to get scared of him and finally just left him —"

"And began tricking."

"That's right. It was easy, to start, because his friends got the word and they all got to be my customers, but I never forgot Jacksy, and so when last night this man came to the door and told me that Jacksy was in trouble on the West Coast and wanted to get some word to me, like a fool I let him in, and as soon as I slipped the chain off, both of them — there was another one hiding up against the wall, they came rushing in, and there I was."

"You didn't happen to have a, well, client, in there, did you?"

"Oh, no, of course not. Or I wouldn't have let them in. Well, they turned the apartment upside down, took my trick books — all of them but one which they couldn't find. 'We can get real money for these,' they said, laughing, like, and they can, too; girls will pay big for something like that — names, addresses, phone numbers — prices —. Still, they're not so smart — I know all my tricks and can get in touch with them any time I want to."

"All right, But what about the burglary and theft?"

"Oh, that. Well, I had some watches — they were still on the card, like in the store —"

"And they were cads enough to believe that they had been stolen. How boorish can you get."

By that time we had got some breakfast at Ken's Kitchen on McKinney and were headed back to my car in the parking lot. I had quoted her the price, a hundred-and-twelve-fifty for the bond, being fifteen percent of seven-hundred-and fifty, and in addition fifty each

for the writ and the vag case. "I've got the money at the apartment," she had said in jail, and now, driving down Lemmon West with the morning sun glinting rose-red on the stone latticework of 3525 Turtle Creek, "I'll give you the money when we get home," said Olga, and then casually, "I don't suppose you'd be interested in taking it out in trade?"

I grinned raffishly to see how the genteel scruples against tricking with one's barrister had somehow faded away like dew before the morning sun. "No," I said just as casually, a refusal which was to rise up and haunt me on many a bitter midnight, and along with it then, the refrain of the old English folk song:

"We have a flower in our fields  
They call it marigold;  
And he that doth not when he may,  
He shall not when he would."

Following this conversation, we went up to the apartment and I was paid — in money — and a week or ten days later the burglary and theft was not filed, and the county vag was dropped along with it. One of the officers though, apparently finding it easier to commit perjury than to make out a case under the vagrancy statute, filed a prostitution charge against her. After taking a plea on this in Corporation Court, I took it up on appeal to the county, but by the time it came up I had lost touch with the defendant and had to take a fine and pay costs on it, and there the matter ended.

But with Olga and me things had a way of not ending, and a few weeks after the vagrancy arrest she called me again, her voice sounding tinny and remote like somebody talking into an echo chamber. I went over at once, and stepping into the livingroom, noticed a portable phonograph on the coffee table and a Beatles album on the floor beside it.

"Here," said Olga "—here — just see what I've got."

"Ah, the Beatles — 'Let Me Hold Your Hand' — and all that — love that rock and roll."

"Oh, no. This is different. This is *Yellow Submarine* and a lot of wonderful things, and I don't know what all." She was clad in blue jeans and a man's shirt, her hair was uncombed, and her grasp on my sleeve was nervous and twitchy. "Listen, Mr. Tay; have you ever been on a trip?"

"Trip? Well, yes I've traveled around a little here and there, like everybody else."

"Oh, you know what I mean — *acid trip* —. Listen, it's — well, when you're on a trip, you can look down into the phonograph there, and it shows you what you are, and the inside of it, the phonograph, there, is God; and this," and she pointed to the spindle set

in the center of the turntable, "this is Jesus — and then you look down and as I said, see who you are, and you don't like it — here, let's go downtown and get that record, *Revolver* and then bring it up here and play it."

So we went downtown, with me thinking this is the wildest, man; and also wondering what would happen if she got busted and me along with her, the both of us for vagrancy — she for being, and me for being with, a prostitute. Back at the apartment she played part of the record while I listened politely for a few minutes and then I got up and left. As I strolled toward the door she was babbling something about "giving up all this and taking a house in East Dallas where I can keep children while their mothers work."

"Yeah, sure," I said, "yeah sure"; and several weeks later, I went over to Trinity Heights and picked up little Rose Dawn, and when the requisite six months' waiting period was over, put through the adoption without a hitch. The only word I had from Olga was a grimy post-card from El Paso, begging me not to reveal her whereabouts and telling me that she was attending barber college there under the name of Ruth Marie Jackson. Now in early November, as I walked away from Judge Russell's Juvenile Court, I thought, I have surely heard the last of Olga Kinnard. One drizzly chill Sunday afternoon in December though, I answered the phone, to hear a sepulchral male voice on the other end of the line.

"Hello. Mr. Tay? This is Bonner Sadat. I'm a friend of Olga Kinnard's. I'm up here for the week-end on a pass, and she'd like you to come down and see her."

"See her? Where, for God's sake?"

"In Terrell. She checked herself in there, about October, and has been there ever since."

Terrell. Where I had almost gone, and where so many of my clients, friends and acquaintances had been. Well all right, I thought, what the hell; and the following Sunday, I drove down to the little country town thirty-five miles east of Dallas. The yellow, blue and red Yule lights were festooned up above the main street, and the bright-colored lights were beginning to wink off and on also in my heart.

"Oh, God," I thought, "not again," and drove on out to the hospital at the edge of town.

"She's got ground privileges — you'll find her out there somewhere," said the woman at the desk inside one of the red brick buildings with the heavy-gauge wire screens on the windows. Wandering through the grounds beneath the big live oaks, I found her.

She was wearing orange fishnet pantyhose, along with a swaggering lemon-hued guardsman's coat, a sweater and patent-leather

shoes to match. In a mini-skirt of dark brown wool, she was swinging along with a healthy countrywoman's stride, talking earnestly to a hulking, melancholy man in his middle thirties. I called out to her and she stopped in her tracks as though shot; "Ah, Mr. Tay, how nice"; and she introduced me to the young man who mumbled something to the effect that you two will be wanting to talk alone, and so he left us. Olga smiled at me, although it was a tired, wary smile and I saw that her hair had been allowed to grow undyed, and showed a rusty part in the middle.

"How are you, Olga? Are you going to be all right?"

We were walking back toward my car where, in honor of the season, I had a few trifling presents stashed away, some drugstore stationery and ball-point pens, and a box of Coty's dusting powder. "Oh, yes," she said, and laughed, "though I just lay on the bed and cried, the first week or ten days, and then got up, and now I work in the barbershop — they even let me use a razor, although no women are supposed to work in there, and not with razors."

Castrating female, I thought, half in earnest, half in jest, they're all over; and having brought along my guitar, batted out a few songs for her, sitting on top of a picnic table with both of us looking pretty dashing I thought, if a trifle out of place, the gray-haired older man in the sports cap and cashmere jacket, and the wistful, lost-soul young woman arrayed, mod-shop style, in the hues of some tropical parrot. Pretty soon Olga said she was due back on the ward.

"I'll open this junk later"; she motioned to the presents, and I thought, well God damn, next time I must remember to hire a chauffeur and motor down in His and Her Rolls Royces, after the fashion of the items in the *Neiman Marcus Christmas Catalogue*; and, on the subject of motoring,

"Can you come down next Friday and sign out for me?" she asked, with the air of one bestowing a favor. "All right," I said; and sure enough, the following Friday, dutifully drove down to Terrell.

A raunchy, feral odor clung to Olga's skin and clothes, and she explained that the women on the wards were allowed only one bath a week. I found this scent of hers exciting rather than repulsive, and as we laughed and chatted over pie and coffee at Chris' Cafe, I felt the old love-happiness, along with the old love-torture, once more rolling over me. I commented on the fact that she was bare-legged, and she explained that she had got her last mileage out of the orange pantyhose, so, swinging hands like lovers down some country lane, we walked the streets of Terrell in the mist, shopping for a replacement. We could find nothing however, so I drove her back to Dallas, where I left her at the apartment of some friends, girls who had all Been There, too.

After all that, I went down to Terrell a couple of times and brought her back, always taking her to the same place in Dallas, from which GHQ she could run around with her hippie friends, giving her a kiss at the door and some money for a bus ticket back to Terrell the following Sunday. Late in the month, for her birthday, which fell in Christmas week, I bought her a case of Jax beer and a big birthday cake from "Mother" Superior's Bakery, and we both went around to Satori House.

This beat-up two-story frame located at the corner of Congress and Oak Lawn Avenues, was a hang-out for hippies, pot-smokers and nubile runaways, and there I drifted joyously about, dispensing beer and angel food cake to the bearded and be-sandalled ones. They all seemed to accept this figure from the Establishment, or at least his cakes and ale with a good grace; and here Olga was in her element, greeting the straggly-haired, blue-jeaned wandervogel with a wide smile and seeming to be a sort of house-mother to them. Satori House was a sanctuary operated by the Presbyterians under the kindly if controversial hand of a Rev. Douglas, whose office stood open to all, with a big King James Bible on the table and a chromo of Christ the First Hippie plastered on the door. (The term "Jesus freak" was as yet in the wings, waiting for its cue to come on.)

By now, all the time I spent with Olga brought me happiness, and I seemed to have the gift of making her happy too, or at least of reducing her anxiety; but a sort of febrile uneasiness, like unto that of the Rev. Davidson in Maugham's story of Sadie Thompson, ran through all my feelings toward her and occasionally this broke out in alarming fashion.

After Christmas, she was released from Terrell to come to Dallas and take up her barber college work, and this she did, finding somebody to pay her tuition at the school, and finding me to set her up in an apartment and to buy clothes for her. I had never done this before with anybody, and now felt really up in the big Daddy-O time; but then too, after a while, the old lust began to grow on me, and one time I asked her to make love with me.

"I can't, right now," she said; "rather, I could, but it would be horrible and messy — but come back Sunday, and —."

So, sure enough, on the appointed day, I showed up with a heart full of hope and a pocket full of Trojans, and she came out of the bedroom in some green silk pajamas that she had snatched from one of her lovers in the old tricking days, and we had some coffee and rolls, and I could see one lovely pendant breast winking at me from beneath the pajamas and started to take her in my arms but stopped cold instead, standing still, with my eyes fixed on the floor. Loki, I

kept thinking, Loki, you sorry son of a bitch, she's trying to climb out of the God-dam' pit and you're trying to push her back down into it. And anyway, to her it'd just be another trick, and she needs for you *not* to, worse than you need *to*. I told all this to Olga as she sat there on a barstool in the kitchenette with that mocking glint in her eyes and that half-moon smile, and at the end she clapped her hands and cried out like a little girl at a birthday party, "Very pretty!"; and there the matter ended.

All this was somewhere in a block of apartments near the Wynnewood section of Oak Cliff, where one of Olga's fellow cliff-dwellers was a presentable young chap named Sim Rivers. She and Sim became lovers, and then one day Olga told me they were going to be married, "Down at the courthouse, I guess," she said forlornly. At this I volunteered to give them a wedding at my place on Ulvik Drive. After all, we had done the same thing a week or so previously for some other friends of mine, Ran Bauhofer and his bride Nan, and it too had been a joyous occasion, and one without too much bother or expense.

My wife was a good sport about all this and iced a cake, and I bought four magnums of a fairly worshipful champagne. On a beautiful day then, in mid-April, we held the wedding. Olga showed up in a maidenly white nylon sheath and a shoulder-spray of orchids to match; in low heels, and, out of nervousness, chewing gum. The minister was the house chaplain at Terrell, and among the guests were the girls from the apartment, the people who had paid Olga's tuition, and of course, myself.

"They are angels sent to you," said the minister to Olga some time during the afternoon; and when the ceremony was over we all gathered on the patio in the brilliant spring sunshine and drank the bride's health again and again.

This was an ending, of course, out of Gene Stratton Porter or at best Rudolph Friml, and I never saw Olga again, except for one time, downtown, coming out of El Centro. At this two-year city college she was majoring in psychology and making straight A's, and she assured me that she was happy. I kissed her on the cheek and then stood watching her go on up the street away from me, feeling toward her that mingling of affection and resentment which we have towards those who have somehow made us not only better than we are, but better than we deserve to be.

# # #



*PART FOUR*

*THE LONGEST TRAIN I EVER SEEN:  
CONCLUSION*

“The longest train I ever seen  
 Was a hundred coaches long;  
 My true-love was on that train;  
 On that train and gone.”

In September 1966, you could still hitch a ride on a passenger train out of Dallas, and on the 12th of that month, Orianne and I stood on the platform at the Union Terminal, waving goodbye to Rick.

Early that Spring, with his National Merit and other gung-ho achievements at St. Luke's, he had had no trouble in snaring that most coveted of all high school prizes, “the college of his choice” — and this had turned out to be Oberlin. Orianne had decreed that he go up to Ohio by train, riding day coach to Oklahoma City (“You meet more *girls* that way”) and then taking the Pullman from there. Two of his classmates, Nestor and Blumstein had come down to see him off, and for a snapshot they all posed together, virile, handsome and casually clad, but with Rick in coat and tie (“You always *dress* for travel”). Well, pretty soon the train pulled out, and to all intents and purposes took our son out of our lives forever.

Orianne and I walked down the platform together in silence, and then I went back to work. Later in the evening I re-joined her at the Blue Front, where Frank Tolbert was holding an autographing party for his new book, one concerned with chili and entitled *A Bowl Of Red*. Willie and the Schliepak girls were still there, as they had been fourteen years earlier for my autographing party across the street; everybody was high and shouting, and to ease my sorrow, I laughed and talked with them and ingested Rabelaisian quantities of Fritos, chili and Pearl draft beer. Later on though, back home, I went into the bedroom and broke down, sobbing. “Joe,” I kept saying, “Joe, where are you; where did you go?”

“Just wait til your son leaves,” one of my clients once told me, “you’ll cry for a solid year”; now I thought of this and said to myself, “Yeah, it’s just like a death in the family, only not half as much fun.”

Of course, I was not the first of all the fathers since the beginning of time, to see my son go out in the world, taking with him my heart

and the pick of my best neckties. However, my sorrow was mixed with shame that I should have any feeling but joy to have such a fine son, when all around me I saw kids of his age letting their hair grow to Old Testament proportions, running around with thieves, or in the basement of the City Hall, being escorted upstairs in handcuffs by members of the Narcotics Squad.

Well, whatever our sorrows were at Rick's leaving, they were laced with happy memories, and many of these were concerned with trips that we all took together. Several of these were to Mexico, and on one of them we took Zeffie Grant with us. Zeffie was a merry-souled little butter-ball with a searching mind, a good bust and stout legs. She was blue-eyed and black-haired, a delight to behold, and on our trip, while staying at Tabuado on the outskirts of San Miguel Allende, Rick and Zeffie and I took our lives in our hands one day by scheduling a bus trip over the mountains to Guanajato, the Place of the Frog. At this time, in the mid-Sixties, Mexico had not yet got the news about the mini-skirt, and Zeffie showed up for the trip in a blue dotted-swiss dirndl whose hemline rode four or five inches above the knee. As she swayed through the streets of the romantic old University town, traffic ground to a halt; brakes squealed; men stopped to stare and whistle; women looked in the other direction; and one of two youths at a second story window held a pair of binoculars on us as the other called out, "Can we *help* you with anything?"

In the big *mercado* we bought a watermelon and a short butcher knife, and in a gesture of gringo bad manners, split the melon and ate it in the public square. Those stares seemed to grow a little more stony and disgusted, but we cared not a fig, and I twitted Zeffie on the effect she was producing.

"You're in a fair way to becoming immortal," I said. "As a culture-goddess. Come back in a hundred years, and there'll be a statue of you in that dress"; and perhaps, who knows, even today at the memory of her, some shy Mexican hard-on is being raised somewhere South of the Border.

There was also, before Rick left, one final trip and that a near fatal one. This was in August 1966, just three weeks or so before he was to leave. All that year, I had been weighed down with sorrow at the prospect, trying to put it from my mind, and now we went for the last time he and I, up to the Unitarian Summer Institute together. My sister Manon was in Dallas on a visit, and she went with us, leaving Orianne to come up later in the week.

I borrowed the Martine house trailer, and their yellow pick-up truck to haul it. We left Rick at the Youth Camp, to horse around as usual, to sit in on the endless discussions and to toss around the

newly discovered words, dichotomy, charisma, confrontation and meaningful dialogue.

I was conducting a writing workshop at the Lodge, where Manon dutifully sat in on my class, and with her sat Lavinia Griffin, a tall beautiful red-head from Tennessee. Lavinia and I soon became kaffee-klatz friends, and on Tuesday night she and I and Manon were with a group of others on the gentle slope of the lake-shore where the sunset talks were often held. A hoot was in progress but I did not stir nor try to perform; I drank beer, and lay with my head in Lavinia's lap for hours. The night was clear and soft and the voices were all around us, singing old songs and new and then subsiding into laughter which mingled with the popping open of beer cans. Tomorrow Orianne would come up, and in a month or less Rick would be gone; I wanted the night never to end; I wanted never to go home. I did not fondle Lavinia nor even tried to kiss her, but could feel her thighs warm beneath me; she was wearing shorts in the bland Oklahoma night, and her face above me was remote and beautiful like that of some Pre-Raphaelite blessed damozel, with her red-gold hair pale in the distant firelight; and so we lay for hours, as the others drifted away, and finally it was three o'clock in the morning and I took her to the door of her cabin and kissed her good night.

And then on Friday noon it was all over, and we went by to pick up Rick at the Youth Camp. He and I took turns driving the truck on the way home, and then outside of Denton I was at the wheel, with the memory of the night before and the dread of the next few weeks heavy upon me. At the top of a hill I ran alongside some big gravel trucks and insanelly enough started dragging with them, coming over the brow of the hill at well over sixty miles an hour.

"Don't drive much over forty," Mr. Martine had cautioned me; "Sure," I had said, "sure"; and now, coming down the hill with Orianne and Manon and two or three kids in the station wagon behind us, the trailer began to pitch and sway and they could see that we weren't going to make it and I could sense it, too. I tried to brake down but couldn't, and the trailer listed over as the right wheel snapped off and went rolling down into the ditch. Somehow I got the truck off the highway and onto the shoulder and came shuddering to a halt.

Hours later we got a wrecker to come out from Dallas to haul us in. Mr. Martine was a good sport about it and let me pay only for the haul into Dallas, some thirty dollars, steadfastly refusing anything for the repairs. "Been wanting to put some better wheels under there for a long time," he said stoutly, and there the matter lay; and from then on, everybody but me always referred to it as "the acci-

dent.”

Meanwhile, lo, the days were hastening on by prophet bards foretold; and one day Rick went down to buy some luggage and came back from a garage sale at Nancy Marcus’ with a twenty-year old leather valise, and this we spent one Sunday afternoon saddle-soaping and polishing in our back yard, with me feeling like an old armorer fitting out a young knight for his maiden joust. Then The Day, of which I have spoken, finally arrived, and soon after it, Orianne and I turned our thoughts back home and inwards, and in some measure, toward our tenant Sol Gismant.

Sol, then in his fourteenth year, was a pianist and a student at St. Luke’s and we had recruited him to stay with us to fill up the gap that Rick had left and to keep Orianne and me from each other’s throats. Sol was a short stout brown-eyed Jewish boy full of yak and bounce, brimming with talent and with the expressive ox-eyes of the young Picasso. He had the dubious complexion of the adolescent, along with a weight problem and, as a result of his driving nature and abrupt manner, a reputation for boorishness. (“Oh you don’t want to take Sol Gismant into your home; he just goes around the campus and won’t speak to *anybody*.”)

As might be imagined, Sol was a fascinating if sometimes irritating house-guest, and his touch at the piano was superb. Not too many years before, Orianne had come into the gift of a new Steinway grand, and this we kept up to concert pitch for our gifted tenant. He in turn responded by playing Chopin for me, and I spent many happy hours with an after-dinner cigar and a glass of cocktail sherry, listening to the ballades and nocturnes and feeling like one of the Esterhazys at least.

After graduation in 1969, he went on to Juilliard. After only two years there, he journeyed to Warsaw, where he won the acclaim of the critics in the great Chopin competition, and before he was nineteen, was making recordings in Poland and enjoying a concert tour of the country.

Over the years, Orianne and I grew to love him and to wonder at his flowering genius. He responded as best he could and in his own way, his life being the lonely ego-fattening one of the competitive hard-driving performing artist, a life which inspires more admiration than affection, more worship than love.

On a much reduced scale, all of this might have been said about my own career as folk singer, which, during these years continued to blossom. I have already spoken of the record albums which had come out during the Fifties. By the end of the decade, this activity was at an end, although I continued to enjoy the fame if not the royalties which they brought me.

In one of my finest hours, during the summer of 1956, at a time when I still had delusions of grandeur about becoming a truly great folk singer, Moe Asch had taken me into Sam Goody's record shop in New York. There, upon being introduced, I found myself being photographed, and people crowding around me with autograph books. On that trip also, to a music merchants' convention, I met Irving Kolodin at the *Saturday Review*, offices, where he commissioned me to do a full page article for him on a Library of Congress album of Uncle Remus stories done in the Gullah dialect.

But all that was as a flash in the pan; the Burl Ives tradition and style was on its way out and the Kingston Trio mode on its way in, although old country blues singers and traditionalists such as Lightnin' Hopkins and Uncle Dave Macon continued to flourish. For all that, I continued to enjoy performing where and when I could — with Mance Lipscomb and Caroline Hester at the North Park Mall, at various women's clubs and at hoots organized by the Dallas Folk Music Society, at Ron Shipman's Rubaiyat and Carol Rehders' Glad Hand, at the Dust Bowl in Tulsa and at Alan Damron's Chequered Flag in Austin.

I continued as of yore to enjoy the meetings of the Texas Folklore Society, listening to the wit and learning of the presented papers and keeping up old friendships. Both Orianne and I took great pleasure in all this, and in the trips that took us out of town every Easter. One calm moonlit night at Sul Ross College in Alpine, I was standing on the porch of the girls' dorm, enjoying the mile-high atmosphere and reaching down into the cooler for a can of beer. Jock Bree was at my elbow quoting Keats, as he accepted a cold and dripping Schlitz from my hands:

“O, for a draught of vintage that hath been  
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth'.”

“Yes,” I said, “‘with beaded bubbles winking at the brim’.”

“Loki,” said Jock, popping his beer can open and raising it up to the moon in salute, “you never should have been a lawyer. Well anyway, let's drink a toast — as I guess you know, this happens to be A. E. Housman's birthday.”

For the approval of this group also, I slaved for the better part of a year, a labor of love, on an article on hot rod slang. On this paper, which I completed with the help of Charlie Macadam and other speed-shop honchos, I worked for many a month and was delighted to see it break out in print in the Society's annual hard-back volume for 1968.

"Once you go to the post office, you are lost."

So Thoreau's fellow-misanthrope Channing is said to have remarked, to which the famous recluse replied, "No. Only if you get a letter."

Well, early in the Spring of 1966, I finally bought a power lawn-mower, thinking as I did so, "Well, now you've got a mower, you are really lost; but no — only if you get an edger."

For my purchase of this emblematic suburban appliance was one of the most significant acts of my life, symbolizing as it did my resolve to put an end to the House War.

It may be recalled that on Labor Day, 1963, I had settled down to count the days until June 2, 1966. On New Year's Day 1966, however, with Rick's graduation only five months away, and inspired in part by a saying of Dostoevsky's, that it is useless to spend one's life hating and being afraid, I made a resolution — to slam an iron door on the past; yes, and to listen no more to the tape that had been playing over and over in my head for more than four years. I knew now, with the deadline facing me, that I could never leave; that I was more dependent upon Orianne than she upon me and that in my own twisted fashion, I loved her truly. To this end, I began to patch things up as best I could, in an attempt to restore the old confidence and love, to put Humpty Dumpty back together again.

From the first, after our move to the suburbs, I had steadfastly refused to lift a finger about the house; yard-men took care of the lawn, and how and by whom the garbage got carried out was a matter which I viewed with a lordly indifference.

Now, with the New Year's resolution strong upon me, I began to concern myself with household matters, to mow the lawn and to carry out the garbage, and, even to put an end to the storming-out scenes. After our move to Ulvik Drive there had been four or five of those, when in a orgasm of shouting and tears, I had thrown some clothes into my car and burst out of the house vowing never to return; always returning the next morning however, and not always welcome at that.

"You came back too soon," was my greeting at least once during this period, but come back I did, and welcome or not, stayed.

In addition, I finally did away with The War Chest. Part of this was an envelope in my safety deposit box which held ten one-hundred dollar bills, an even grand, ready for flight or fight as the occasion demanded. The other part of it was ten thousand dollars, left over from the sale of the Hood Street property and kept virginal and intact in a secret savings and loan account. I now took all this loot, and with some of it paid off the remaining balance on our new home, and placed the rest of it in a joint account with Republic

Savings and Loan. One of the things we had always enjoyed doing was traveling, and now I began to plan more and more trips for Orianne and me. In 1966 and thereafter, we journeyed to the Ozark Folk Festival at Eureka Springs, made a float trip by canoe down Mariscal Canyon in the Big Bend Country, took a junket to Nassau, and spent a lovely Indian Summer during a three weeks' Show-Tour of London.

In Dallas, I renewed acquaintance with many people whom I had known casually in the church, and began regular attendance, to forge another bond between us.

In the Fall of 1966, we enrolled in a night course at SMU, where, from the lips of psychologist Dr. Jack Strange, I first heard the phrase "under-achiever" and wondered if it applied to me.

"Daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days, —  
To each they offer gifts after his will,  
Bread, kingdom, stars, and sky that holds them all.  
I —  
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily  
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day  
Turned and departed Silent. I, too late,  
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn."

Along with all this, some of the worry-lines began to disappear from Orianne's forehead, and she who had been the Ugly Duckling of Swarthmore Street now began to be known as one of the most handsome women in Dallas, and I was always proud and happy to be seen with her.

So I continued as best I could, to work at reconciliation, to phase-out my philandering and with it to feel toward Orianne more tenderness and less hostility, for all that she never got over her compulsive meddling in the minor aspects of my life and I never got over resenting it.

Thus we lived out our patchwork lives and settled down, after September 1966, once more to watch and wait for the light, with a new graduation goal in mind, one that was set for May 1970.

# # #



As American colleges go, Oberlin is an old school. It had been founded in 1833 as the Oberlin Collegiate Institute, out on the stump-dotted Ohio prairie, not too far from the chilly mists of Lake Erie and only thirty-five miles from Cleveland. Like Washburn in Topeka, it had been launched with high hopes and top-lofty principles; it was the first college in America to admit women to its halls, and "its Colony of elect Christian families was bound together by a solemn covenant which pledged them to plainest living and highest thinking."

Much of this idealism was still present on the campus of the mid-1960's, where everybody rode bicycles, student cars were forbidden, and the Greek-letter-society mystique was unknown.

"You'll love it," I told Rick before he left, "it's just a big L.R.Y. camp with a good music school and a huge library."

For all that, like most freshmen away at school, he had a wretched time of it his first year. No amount of pre-conditioning prepares a high-school senior, and especially one who has walked away glittering with honors, for the culture-shock which he receives later on, upon finding himself once more on the ladder, but this time at the bottom looking up instead of at the top looking down.

My son toughed it out that first year as best he could, and the summer following in 1967, went gaily off to Cape Cod to play trombone in the Oberlin Gilbert and Sullivan troupe. We never really saw him again, until mid-1970. The summers after 1967, he spent variously at Aix-en-Provence improving his French, and in 1969, in Vienna, riding the Ferris-wheel in the Prater and working on his German. Then finally, in May, 1970 he was ready for graduation: Not that everything had been achieved without blood, sweat and money.

"I spent \$625.50 last year for school, and my brother \$635.15," I had written to Mavis MacLean in June 1932; but from 1966 to 1970, my own son's "plainest living and highest thinking" was running around \$4,000 for two semesters. To meet this, we pieced out on student loans and scholarships, \$1500 a year from me, a sizeable bundle from the Tay Gallery and \$1000 annually from my father-in-law. "It's remarkable how that boy has come 'round," Mr. Martine

had remarked of me about this time, and his approval extended of course to the grandson whom he had always adored.

So much for the financial cost; the emotional one was something else. I have dwelt already on our intense nostalgia for him, but it was balanced by the ecstasy which he created when he came home for vacations. I would begin counting first the months, then the weeks, then the days, and finally the hours until his arrival. Orianne and I would rush out to Love Field to meet him, and I would stand there with, as she said, "a smile that went all the way around." Finally our son would heave into view, six feet of male handsome moodiness clad in coat and tie and with hair still of fairly Establishment length, coming off the American Airlines gangway wearing the sheepish smile of him who is about to be exposed to adoration and carrying the second-hand Navy pea-coat which he had bought in Oberlin for five dollars.

This tightness with money was a thing which disturbed me considerably, for all that his appearance in the pea-coat was symptomatic of the age when most collegians dressed like refugees from a disaster area, anyway. Perhaps this concern with money was tied in with the emotional set-to which he had, right on schedule, in his junior year. The identity crisis was considered very chic in those years, inspired by or at least brilliantly described in the writings of Erik Erikson, and one day in January 1969, during the short winter-project term, I got a long distance call at the office from my son.

"Dad," he said, his voice seeming to be painfully extruded from some place deep within his being, "Dad, can you come on up here? I'd — well, just like to talk to you." I was distressed beyond measure, but not especially surprised at this. His recent letters had been showing a depressed, low profile; he had turned down any suggestion that he see a psychiatrist but had consented to go over to Case-Western Reserve in Cleveland for some personality tests.

Of course I was in Cleveland late that night, renting a car and driving through the sodden, chilly fields to Oberlin. I met my son the next morning for breakfast. His manner was distant and polite, he seldom smiled, and his throat muscles seemed constricted as he told me that he couldn't go on in school; that he wanted to quit and just "go away somewhere to get a job."

At this time his major was in the field of art history and his goal was to become a museum director. Although freed from home ties now for two and a half years, perhaps he was still a reflexive personality, one who like the "good darkey" of the Old South, is not himself really, but rather what someone else wants him to be.

That afternoon we wandered disconsolately through the elm-lined streets of the old college town and then got in the car and drove out

to Lake Erie. There, we parked on the shore and stared out over the lead-colored suicidal waters which were fringed with dirty rotting ice.

"If you want to," I said, "we can drive up to Cleveland, perhaps take in the museum, have dinner, go to a show —."

"I can't do that," he said wretchedly, "the museum's right across the street practically, from the place where you made me go and take those tests. I can't *ever* go back *there*. Besides, I've got a community-dinner to go to tonight, just a few of us — so I guess that leaves *you* out," he concluded spitefully — and I started the car up and drove back to Lawrence House on North Professor Street. There, in his small bed-sitting room, he took off his coat and shoes and lay down on the lower bed of the double bunk, silently at first, and then doubled up in grief and racked by compulsive weeping.

"I can't stay here in school, I just can't *stay* here," he said, over and over. The room was hot, and by this time I too had taken my coat and shoes off, and stooping over and thinking of Joseph Severn and the dying John Keats, sat down at the head of the bed with my back against the wall.

"There, there," I said, and he leaned back against me and held up his right hand in the shape of a claw.

"Just look at *that!*" he cried out, and for the first time I noticed how long white and slender his powerful fingers were, "just look at that — I can't even unbend it."

"There, there," I said again, and half an hour or so later he dozed off. I put a pillow under his head and eased out of the room and over to the Student Psych. Center on the second floor of the Administration Building.

After leaving the room, I had telephoned ahead for an emergency appointment; there in the office of Dr. Marlin Root, it was my turn to break down and weep.

"God damn it, I'm the one that ought to be applying for treatment," I kept saying; "I'm the official family neurot, for Christ's sake; take me, take me!"

Well, of course he couldn't do that and we both knew it, and later that afternoon Rick went over to see him, and in the weeks following they had some sessions together. I have never known the nature or content of those conferences; they were not many in number, but at any rate, in the Spring Rick changed his major to German and bade the art world good-bye. "I felt like a voyeur," he had told me, "looking, looking, looking, at those damned pictures over at the Allen Gallery."

One gathers from this that he had not gone job hunting, but had, rather, stayed in school, prompted perhaps by Dr. Root, perhaps, in

those days of college-deferments. by the prospect of toting an M-16 through the rice paddies of Vietnam if he should drop out of Oberlin.

So he, like me in 1930, hung in there for the Spring semester, and with the exception of a bout with mononucleosis, got through it all right. Then, still another year later, in the third week of May, 1970, Orianne and I drove up to Ohio for his graduation.

If I had drawn up the specs myself, I could not have manufactured a more beautiful day. The sun shone, the birds sang, and it was cool beneath the big elms of Tappan Square. Purcell's "Tower Music," with our son on trombone, sounded out from the campanile of Finney Chapel, and on the greensward five hundred or so people sat patiently on folding chairs to watch their children graduate. At Kent State, not too many miles away, the killing of four students by the National Guard had happened just twenty days before. Instead of protesting, marching or smashing windows, however, the Oberlin students and faculty had whipped up a production of Mozart's *Requiem* and at their own expense, presented it at the National Cathedral in Washington.

Now, with their cap-and-gown money donated to the Kent State Fund, the graduates paraded across the platform bareheaded, the men in white shirts and dark slacks and the girls in sleeveless summer dresses. Crude bandages, made of torn bedsheets and displaying a red ball encircled in black, decorated their left arms, and each one in turn solemnly bore away his little red-leather folder with its passport to the riches and glory of the world tucked inside.

The commencement address was given by a Rev. Thacker from Power to the People, a barrel-chested black of great presence and oratorical elan, who subjected his audience to a monotoned, high-decibel tirade on the subject of racial injustice. As a parent who had been at some pains to give his son one of the best educations in America, I expected, somewhere along the line, a brief nod of appreciation, but found myself instead being horse-whipped for failing to present this new generation with the glittering universe it so richly deserved. I was disappointed also not to hear the old phrase, "To you we hand the torch," but reflected that perhaps commencement orators had ceased to proffer this incendiary device out of fear that some of their listeners might use it.

Long before commencement was over, I crept away in my shame and drove the car over to the Texaco station near Tappan Square, noting as I did so, the cagily deployed squad cars all around the perimeter of the campus.

"Dam' rabble-rouser," said the middle-aged man at the gas pumps, listening to the exhortation still coming on strong over the

loud-speakers. Pretty soon though, it was all over, and Orianne and I went back to French House and finished Rick's packing. We toted his cartons of books to the post-office and lashed his bicycle to the top of the car, while he went through the grounds saying good-by to all his friends, and kissing Dosie Winters and Evie Keefe farewell forever.

Back in 1966, I had promised my sisters a visit upon this occasion, and now we drove on up to Ithaca and from there to Cape Cod. It was a time of high spirits and of congratulations for the new graduate, and we enjoyed picnicking with Manon and with my niece Maria who was raising a family in Ithaca. This was Finger-Lake Territory, a region of clear lakes and wooded hills, and Manon drove us around in her little red Falcon, showing us the sights, the steep winding avenues of the old college town, and the campus of Cornell where not too many months before, the bandolier-swathed militants had taken over the Student Union. After a day or so, Manon drove me to the Cape while Orianne and Rick followed in the station wagon.

As we buzzed along the freeways through the beautiful hills of Upstate New York we resurrected old family jokes and talked about our past lives and about the decade we had just been through.

Yes, the Sixties lay behind us, a decade which had seen Jack and Bobby, not to mention Jackie and Ari; one which had somehow survived not only the Bay of Pigs and the Watts riots but also the poetry of Allen Ginsberg and the prose of Norman Mailer; one which had seen Marilyn Monroe and the Beatles as well as the war in Vietnam and open-heart surgery. Those had been the years of the moon-walk and of Martin Luther King, of the hippie commune, as well as the Ecumenical Council of Pope John, of the interest in ecology and of the musical show *Hair*; of the drug scene, the underground newspaper and the rock festival; of America-Love-It-Or-Leave-It; of Women's Lib and LSD, of Make-Love-Not-War; of the Peace Corps and, in the very teeth of what Ortega y Gasset has termed the vertical invasion of the barbarian, the daring extension of The Open Society to minorities of every hue, age and sex.

During it also, Manon had lost her husband and sold off her home; I had built up a law practice from scratch and "with a little help from my friends," put Rick through St. Luke's and Oberlin; I had pulled down my marriage about my ears and then tried to rebuild it from the rubble; I could say, like the French nobleman in 1800 looking back on the Revolution and the Reign of Terror, that what I had done, was to survive.

This was more than could be said for many a good man who now lay at rest, Dag Hydell, Spike Angrist and Jac Banewicz among

them. Buzz Elder, my old friend from Topeka days had been put out to grass by his airline and was happily roaming the golf courses of the world; Fox Mahaffay too, had called it quits after his massive coronary, and likewise was golfing it up around La Jolla. All the Grandisons were long since dead, the beautiful Vilia Mae most wretchedly of cancer, a disease which was even at this time making inroads upon the life of my folk singing friend Miriam Galerstein. Arlo Hornbeam had climbed into a bottle and had divorced Amanda, who was now living a restricted myopic existence as editor of a scientific magazine at M.I.T. and fearful of going out at night into the Cambridge Streets. Nora and John Brandon were living in California, where she was the fashion editor of *The Oakland Advocate*, and where as she said, she "dealt all day long with people who would die for a hemline." I could only hope that the Baron was still treading the earth, and wondered if he could remember any lines from Ernest Dowson or Robinson Jeffers. The Martine Music Company continued to prosper without me, and Mr. Martine had sold the old building on Elm Street for nearly a million dollars and moved the firm into new tailor-made quarters in Oak Lawn.

I too had shifted my business address, into a building not too far removed from the old one. Here again I shared a library and office space with some other lone-wolf counselors, and here also I kept up with my writing. I found an hour and a half in the day, from seven to eight-thirty in the morning, that nobody else wanted, and often-times would be sitting down to the typewriter hardly noticing that the dawn was stealing over the magnificent oak tree in the parking lot and thinking sometimes of Silas Marner:

"The livelong day he sat in his loom, his ear filled with its monotony, his eyes bent close down on the slow growth of sameness in the web . . . . But at night — he closed the shutters, and made fast his doors and drew out his gold."

Now, late in May 1970, Manon and I drove on, and after a few days' visit with Jane on the Cape, I flew home, leaving Orianne and Rick to take their own time getting back to Texas. American Airlines brought me into Dallas about noon on Memorial Day, and I gazed from afar at the skyline with a smile, seeing the blocks of new buildings everywhere and the city itself spread out now over most of the county. The 1970 census would count more than a million and a half people in the metropolitan area, and the big buildings were still going up. I could see the ziggurat-hulk of Number One Main Place and the sleek dark glass of the First National, the towering Southland Center, and down by the new Courthouse, the unroofed, beige concrete walls of the Kennedy Memorial.

Orianne and I had stood on the curb That Day, in November

1963, while the open-top Lincoln passed down Lemmon Avenue within twenty feet of us. I snapped my own Kodachrome of the scene, Jackie in the pink pillbox and suit, smiling and waving to the right, and the President to the left, and then the chartered Greyhound bus with the press corps farther back in the procession. "What have *they* got to write about?" I wondered, seeing that there was nothing but good cheer everywhere, and I shouted over the heads of the crowd, "Jackie — Jackie, I love you!"

Well, the Kennedy Plaza and its Memorial then, and the new block-square, ten-story courthouse; and I thought of the times when I would raise the towers of Dallas on the horizon as I drove toward town after a vacation at Bog Springs or Amarillo and feel the old hostility and frustration boiling up within me, the sorrow and depression at coming back to face defeat once more.

Now however, instead of coming into Dallas with the old dread, I approached it with a quickening of the pulse. I had grown to love this place which, for all that in times past it had been dubbed the Murder Capital of the country, was soon to win a coveted award as the All-America City. This was a town whose streets were bright with peril and inequity as well as with decency and wealth, a town through whose streets surged a restless, God-fearing, newly-rich, fashion-mad, trigger-happy populace; a town which was a famous medical, legal-research and religious center, but which, although it supported art galleries and museums, operas, ballets and schools of music, nevertheless would probably always be more devoted to the Dallas Cowboys than to the Dallas Symphony. Yes, I loved it now as one loves a beautiful, dangerous and wayward woman, as much for her faults as for her virtues, and I could approach it now feeling that I too was part of it, that in my own small way I had helped to shape it as it was.

Perhaps, I mused, sometime in the future, in my next incarnation, it would be here that I would once more find myself; perhaps then I would be more compassionate and less compulsive, would aspire to be more dedicated and less dashing, more driving and less driven.

Perhaps — perhaps. Who could tell?

Who, indeed?

THE END